

CONQUER

2019



21 Days of Praying & Fasting JOURNAL

**20280 Lyndon, Detroit, MI 48223
Spencer T. Ellis, Pastor**

Grace and peace be unto you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our resurrected, risen, and reigning, and returning redeemer.



The very first message that I preached in 2019, was entitled, “Conquer 2019!” I talked about how, in this New Year, we must learn to not be distracted by obstacles, discourage by opposition, and we must find a reason to celebration every day this year. Again this year, the 21 days before Easter, we pause as a collective church family to center ourselves in the will of God through prayer and fasting. We seeking and expecting to hear the voice of God as we submit ourselves through this spiritual

discipline. We are so proud that you have made a covenantal commitment to embark on this journey with us. As you begin to see yourself transformed through this powerful time of prayer, fasting, and self-discipline, we eagerly anticipate the testimonies of God’s transformative power in and through your lives.

Fasting in an important reminder to Christians of the power of the Spirit to control the flesh. Whether you frequently fast or if this is your first time ever trying this discipline, fasting will quickly remind each of us of the necessity to place our total dependence on God. It is with this in mind that we take this step together, seeking God to lead our church, our leaders, and our individual families into the next season.

Fasting is voluntary abstinence and restriction of food and activities for a specified period of time to devote ourselves to prayer and bible reading. It is a means of seeking God by denying the physical in order to focus on the spiritual.

Before you turn the pages and commence this fast, allow me to leave you with the words of the author of Hebrews: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exist and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Spencer T. Ellis
Pastor

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Fast Schedule

The fast will begin on Monday, April 1 and will end on Easter Sunday, April 21.

Daily Prayer

April 1 – April 21
6:00 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

Prayer Conference

(712) 775-8972
Code: 280910

Exceptions

- Sundays: no 10:00 p.m. prayer conference calls.

Please share with us. Tell us your testimony, your challenges, what you are learning, etc.; Pastor Ellis would like to share with others.

Pastor will never use your name without your permission.

Use one of the following communication channels:

- **Citadel's APP – Prayer Wall**
- **Email: 21dayfast@citadelofpraise.org**
- **Facebook Group: www.Facebook.com/groups/COP21Days**
 - *This is a Fast Facebook Group where you can connect with others for encouragement, support and prayer!*

Citadel's website and social media pages:

- **CitadelofPraise.org**
- **Facebook: Citadel of Praise**
- **Twitter: Citadel_Detroit**
- **Instagram: Citadel_Detroit**
- **Hashtag: #COP21**

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SERVICES

- **Daily Prayer Call at 6:00 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.** Prayer Line: (712) 775-8972, Code: 280910. If you have trouble joining our praying line, three-way call a friend and ask them to call in for you.
- **Sundays:** 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 12:00 noon Worship Services.
- **Tuesdays, April 9 and 16:** Sanctuary Prayer at 12:00-1:00 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m. *No Bible Teaching on these days.*
- **Saturday, April 13:** 6:00-9:00 p.m., Single's Focus and Fellowship led by Pastor Ellis.
- **Thursday, April 18:** 7:00-9:00 p.m., Women's Service and Table Talk led by Lady Tracey Ellis.
- **Friday, April 19:** 12:00 noon, Good Friday, "7 Last Words of Christ Service," *preached by Citadel College of Preachers.*
- **Saturday, April 20:** 5:00 p.m., Easter Baptism Service. *Pastor Ellis will baptize all candidates. Candidate should be in sanctuary by 4:45pm. Baptism clothing will be provided.*
- **Saturday, April 20:** 6:00 p.m., Easter Worship Service. *Designed for those who desire to worship on Saturday and avoid the Easter Sunday crowd. Also for those who enjoy going to worship anytime the doors are open. This is a great time to invite guests to Citadel, especially those who may attend other churches.*
- **Sunday, April 21:** 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12 noon, Easter Worship Services. *Plan to attend at least one of our Easter weekend services. Bring someone with you! Traditional Easter attire is optional. Feel free to come casual-dressed.*

Fast Schedule and Options

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p><u>Choose ONE Fast for April 1-5</u></p> <p>a) Eat ONLY Fruits, Veggies, Salads with no meat, Protein Shakes. No Soda.</p> <p>b) Drink Water ONLY from 6:00am-6:00pm each day. <i>No soda, fried foods, or desserts at any time.</i></p> </div> | | | | | <p>No Fried Foods, Bread, Soda or Desserts</p> |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| <p>FREE EATING DAY <i>No Junk Food</i></p> | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p><u>Choose ONE Fast for April 8-12</u></p> <p>a) Eat ONLY Fruits, Veggies, Salads with no meat. For dinner you can add one piece of grilled fish or chicken. No Soda.</p> <p>b) Drink Water ONLY from 6:00am-6:00pm each day. <i>No soda, fried foods, or dessert at any time.</i></p> </div> | | | | | <p>No Fried Foods, Bread, Soda or Desserts</p> |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| <p>FREE EATING DAY <i>No Junk Food</i></p> | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p><u>Choose ONE Fast for April 15-19</u></p> <p>a) Eat ONLY Fruits, Veggies, Salads with no meat. For dinner you can add one piece of grilled fish or chicken. No Soda.</p> <p>a) Drink Water ONLY from 6:00am-6:00pm each day. <i>No soda, fried foods, or dessert at any time.</i></p> </div> | | | | | <p>No Fried Foods, Bread, Soda or Desserts</p> |
| 21 | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p><u>DO NOT EAT ANY JUNK FOOD</u></p> <p>April 1 – 20</p> </div> | | | | | |

WHAT IS FASTING

As you prepare to embark on this fast, you may be shocked to find out that scripture does not actually require Christian to fast. You might ask yourself, if scripture doesn't require us to fast then why should we? While scripture does not require Christians to fast, scripture clearly does reveal the importance of Christians of fasting. In the Old Testament, fasts were frequently called forth by leaders of a congregation during critical and despairing times (Jeremiah 26:9, Joel 1:14, Daniel 1:8). In the New Testament, Jesus' earthly ministry is preceded by 40 days of prayer and fasting (Matthew 4). Likewise, in the early church, Christians would couple prayer and fasting as a means to hear from God, especially before making important decisions (Acts 13:2; 14:23).

Fasting is an opportunity for Christians to practice the fruit of self-discipline, by abstaining from personal pleasure and fixing their entire attention on God. Although many people will choose to abstain from food during their fast, food is not the only means of fasting. Believers can choose to abstain from anything that can potentially serve as a distraction in their pursuit of seeking God.

HOW TO FAST

Before embarking on a fast, participants should prepare themselves mentally, physically, and spiritually. Keep in mind, that fasting is not a form of dieting, and all participants should consult their primary care physicians before making any changes to their diet. We also suggest preparing your meals in advance, in order to maximize and focus your time and energy.

The objective to fasting is not only to replace them with prayer. If you normally watch TV when you get home from work, consider replacing that time with reading the word of God. As your fast, it is important to be consistent. However, if you break your fast by accident or even miss a few days, don't beat yourself up or give up. Rather, get right back to your fasting objectives. Remember, the objective isn't to be perfect; the objective is to be transformed.

Questions about Fasting

Who should or should not fast?

All believers who are physically able to fast should do so, in order to bring their bodies into submission to the spirit of Christ. Anyone with physical or medical conditions that could be aggravated by fasting should consult their physician before participating in a fast. If you are medically unable to fast or abstain from the prescribed food and beverage, then find something else you enjoy doing and choose to fast from that – television, social networking sites, etc.

Children and youth may choose to participate in a limited-fast under supervision of parents or guardian. This fast includes selecting certain days a week to participate in the fast and/or abstaining from activities they enjoy, such as social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Netflix, Snap Chat, skype, etc.), video games, television, cell phone, texting, etc. During these times youth should seek God in prayer, read scriptures, listen to gospel and worship music, etc.

What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting and prayer combined can bring about a transformational revival in you. It can be a very powerful tool in seeking God. The ultimate purpose of the fast is not you and what you seek, but God. Fasting is a true way to sacrifice for God and humble oneself to Him (Psalm 35:13, Ezra 8:21). Fasting is an act of worship and honoring.

Since fasting and prayer is aimed at breaking the bonds of evil on a person's life, a loved one's life, or on a body of believers, including a family, church, or ministry, expect distractions from the enemy. Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life. When fasting and praying, it is vital to be alert to the tricks of the enemy. This keeps you from reacting to the enemy instead of responding the way God desires.

What if I have never fasted?

God is pleased at our desire to connect with Him. We encourage you to step out on faith and, if necessary, gradually build up to the specified time. For the first 7-10 days, do at least 1-3 days of fasting. Do not become discouraged if you feel tempted to eat outside of the prescribed parameters of the fast; God will give you the strength to overcome your temptation. Ask the Lord to identify someone that can hold you accountable and encourage you during this journey. If possible, team up with a partner.

How do I manage my schedule while fasting?

Physically. Throughout your fast, you may feel somewhat weaker than normal. During the first few days, you may feel tired and irritable. Lightening your workload and cutting down on strenuous exercise would be a very good idea to maintain your health and your morale.

Spiritually. Fasting is not just denying yourself food. It is exchanging the needs of the physical body for those of the spiritual. While fasting, if you dissipate your energy on numerous errands or busy-work to the neglect of spending special time with God, you will starve both physically and spiritually. You will find yourself becoming discouraged and frustrated with your fast

instead of being benefited and uplifted and blessed. I encourage you to arrange your schedule accordingly! However, DO NOT neglect your family, employment, and church obligations while fasting.

What should I expect?

A natural response to fasting and prayer is an increase in hunger for the abstained food. As a result, you may experience hunger pangs, headaches, bad breath, and strong odor from your body as you are eliminating toxins from your body. For this reason, please consider personal hygiene and take extra care of your body. It is perfectly normal to experience these things; therefore breath mints and sugar-free gum are acceptable.

How do I respond to others regarding my fasting?

If you are asked why you are not eating or eating differently, nonbelievers may be satisfied by such a brief answer as, "I have other plans for lunch or I'm doing something different for a while." Be polite and respond, "I rather not talk about it." Christians should be satisfied when you answer that you are fasting.

If friends and family express concern for your health, ease their fears by telling them that you will stop fasting the moment you feel you are harming your body or if the Lord leads you to end your fast.

There is usually no reason for telling strangers or casual acquaintances that you are fasting. If you do, they may subject you to a lot of questions that you may not want to answer. But in any case, use your best judgment and the Lord's leading in telling people about your fast. (Matthew 6:16-18)

Can I celebrate my or someone else birthday, anniversary, special event?

If you must miss a day of fasting because you are attending an event, promise God that you will make it up on Saturday, Sunday, or the week immediately following Easter. Don't be deceived by the devil! The missed day that you makeup, may very well be the day that you experience your greatest breakthrough.

How do I make the best out of this 21-day experience?

As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading time. When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your determination in the face of difficulties and temptations.

Final Fasting Tips

- Make it a priority to be on all prayer calls and attend church during your 21-day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.
- If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it.

Points of Action for 21-days

- Avoid conversation about the lives of others.
- Avoid forms of conversation about past hurts, fears, and disappointments.
- Avoid people who are controlling and negative.
- Avoid people who have the potential to influence you toward habits you are trying to break.
- Be totally honest with yourself and God.
- Remove negative thought processes, patterns, actions, and attitudes with the intent to speak, act, and function with the wisdom of God, Word of God, and the mind of Christ.

GROWING CLOSER TO GOD IS NOT THE RESULT OF TRYING HARDER BUT OF SURRENDERING MORE!

Journaling: Charting Out the Journey

A Christian journal helps you preserve the thoughts, prayers and promises of God that come to you throughout the day. It can be a significant spiritual companion and a reminder of how God's promises have come to pass in your life. Whatever the reason, journaling is an important part of our Christian life. Many times we need to reflect on our circumstances to gain a clearer understanding of God's will and desire for us. Writing things down brings clarity to those thoughts. **The wonderful thing about keeping a Christian journal is that you can write about your strengths, weaknesses, victories, losses, challenges, or anything that touches you while fasting, praying and reading the Scriptures.**

If you are not familiar or accustomed to praying, feel free to use this as your daily prayer.

Consecration Prayer

Father, I give You thanks and praise, for this is the day that You have made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.

I thank You for Your provision, Your protection, and Your power. I thank You for Your presence that surrounds me by night and by day. I thank You for Your Word, which is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway. I thank You that by it, I receive guidance, wisdom and abundant life.

I thank You God, that no weapon formed against me shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against me in judgment, I condemn for that is Your heritage unto me.

I thank You, Lord, for increase is my portion. I thank You, that because I seek to be like Jesus, that I shall increase in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and man. I thank You that the years of my life are increased.

Father, I ask that You help me exercise good stewardship of Your gifts of my time, talent, and financial increase by returning to You in sacrifice a portion of these blessings. I thank You, Father, for this is my set time of favor.

I thank You, Lord, that I am blessed in the city and in the country, blessed in my going out and coming in; I thank You, that my relationships are blessed, that my children are blessed, my home is blessed, my investments are blessed. I thank You, Father that although my enemies step to me one way, they shall flee from me seven ways. I praise You, Father, for the table you have set before me in the presence of my enemies. I thank You, God, for You have commanded blessings to come upon me and overtake me, as I diligently pursue Your word, Your work and Your way.

I thank You that no evil will befall me; neither shall any plague come near my dwelling, for You have given Your angels charge over me. They keep me in all my ways. In my pathway is life, healing and health.

Forgive me, Lord, for allowing any fear, guilt, self-rejection, self-hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, envy, sin, pride, or rebellion to open the door to any sickness or infirmity. I renounce these things and cast out all spirits of infirmity that would attack my body in the name of Jesus.

Lord, You heal all of my diseases. You are the health of my countenance. I decree and declare that I am loosed from diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks, all cancers, high cholesterol, arthritis, blood diseases and physical pain. I command all hereditary spirits of sickness to come out of me, along with any other assignment that was sent to attack my body, for by the stripes of the Lord I am healed. I thank You that, by the blood of the lamb I am delivered, and by the power of God I am set free indeed, for you have redeemed my soul from destruction.

I thank You that I prosper and am in health, even as my soul prospers.

Father, I sever all ungodly soul ties, immoral and unproductive relationships in the name of Jesus.

- I forgive any person who has ever hurt me, disappointed me, abandoned me, mistreated me, or rejected me.
- I renounce all envy, jealousy and covetousness in the name of Jesus.
- I renounce all selfishness, self-will, self-pity, self-rejections, self-hatred, and self-promotion in the name of Jesus.

Lord bless my latter end more than my beginning. Thank You, for restoring to me the years that the devourers have eaten.

I pray Your blessing upon the Body of Christ today. May Your peace surround us. May Your power strengthen us. May Your wisdom instruct us. May Your presence protect us.

I pray that You order my steps, guide my feet and salt my speech in ways that glorify You and edify my brothers and sisters. I pray that discernment would increase, that I may see opportunities to be a blessing to others. I pray that the souls that I touch today will see You shining through me.

I decree and declare that victory is mine today, in the name of Jesus. Goodness and mercy shall follow us. Favor goes before me. The joy of the Lord strengthens me. Through You, I am complete. Through You, I am more than conquerors, this day.

I commit this day to You, in the name of Jesus, I pray. AMEN!

Devotion Day 1

Date: April 1 Scriptures: St. John 1

What if God was one of us?

Jesus was with God when the world was created. He left heaven and entered the earth the way we did — through childbirth. Jesus was human, and He was an ordinary man. God sent John to announce Jesus' arrival on earth.

The book of John records John's account of Jesus' life and ministry. In the beginning, we would expect to see a star, a manger, cattle lowing, angels singing, wise men, and the like. But in the sweeping introduction to John, John doesn't tell of Jesus' story but ours.

“Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3).

Jesus is the initiator of everything. The universe, our lives, our salvation—all were created and conceived by Jesus. As if that wasn't enough, in the most surprising move of all, John says Jesus entered into His creation, becoming a living, breathing human and walking among us. Don't miss this: Jesus became flesh and moved into the neighborhood He created. He played ball down the street with someone's kids. He went to school and got hungry. He scratched up His knees and cried for His mother. He grew up and got a job. He had a real-life, human experience.

Why would He do such a thing? John sets out to answer this question for us. At a wedding, in a late-night debate, beside the drinking fountain, at the local hospital, with a downtrodden woman, at the funeral of a friend and in other situations — John shows us who God is. All along, Jesus risks us misunderstanding Him in order that He might initiate a relationship with us. He doesn't initiate a relationship with us because we are worth it — He initiates a relationship with us to give us a life worth living. In light of all that Jesus has done, how should we live in response?

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Why is it important that Jesus lived as a man among us?
- What next step has God asked you to take? What keeps you from stepping forward?

Devotion Day 2

Date: April 2 Scriptures: St. John 2

Maybe God is waiting on you

Jesus begins His ministry by turning water into wine at a wedding. A short time later, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover. When He finds a market set up in the temple, He runs the merchants out with a whip.

Have you ever felt like you were waiting on God? You feel as though you have been patient forever and just don't know when God will come through. But maybe God is waiting on you.

John 2 tells of a wedding fiasco at Cana. As Jesus and His disciples attend the wedding, Mary realized that all of the wine that served the wedding guests was gone. Wine was an important part of weddings in that time, so not having wine was a big deal. When Mary saw Jesus, she walked up to Him and told Him about the problem. Jesus had the power to wave a hand and flood the wedding with wine, but did He? No. Instead, Jesus gave the opportunity to be a part of a miracle to the servants.

**“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water,’
so they filled them to the brim” (John 2:7).**

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then He told them, ‘Now draw some (water) out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine” (John 2:7–9).

Because of the faithful obedience of the servants, an entire group of people were blessed with a miracle. Imagine if the servants hadn't had the faith to take a step of obedience. Jesus doesn't just want to perform miracles in your life — He wants you to be a part of them.

- What did you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What next step of obedience do you feel God is calling you to take?
- Are you giving your best? What would it look like for you to fill your “water jars” to the brim?

Devotion Day 3

Date: April 3 **Scriptures:** St. John 3

Are you afraid of the dark?

Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, visits Jesus at night to avoid being seen. Jesus tells Nicodemus that only those who believe in Him will be saved. Shortly after, John the Baptist endorses Jesus as the Messiah.

Whether or not we want to admit it, we have all been afraid of the dark. But what makes darkness so scary?

For one thing, it confuses us. When we can't see anyone or anything, we feel isolated and alone. Walking proves difficult because we can't see the path. Although we're usually safe, our imaginations run wild with the dangerous possibilities that could surround us.

We all lived in darkness at one point. Unable to see and believe in God, we lived with a constant sense of loneliness. Uncertain of where to walk, we did things we would probably rather not admit. As unpleasant as it is, we often prefer to stay in the darkness rather than enter the light. We think darkness helps hide the mistakes we don't want anybody to see. We think if people knew the truth about us, they would judge us. But Jesus tells us it is safe to confess our sins. He promises that He did not come to condemn us for our sins, but to save us from them.

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).**

Because Jesus took our punishment, we receive complete forgiveness when we expose our sin to the light. In fact, God can use our mistakes for good if we are willing to confess them. When people see God doing great things through imperfect people, He looks even greater.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What do you need to confess and trust God to forgive today?
- When people confess their sins to you, how do you respond? Are you forgiving or do you tend to judge people? What about your response needs to change as a result of grace Jesus has extended to you?

Devotion Day 4

Date: April 4 **Scriptures:** St. John 4

There's only one way to heal your pain

Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and asks her for a drink. Awed by what Jesus had to say, the woman brought everyone from town to meet Him. From there, Jesus traveled to Galilee and healed a government official's son.

Jesus wasn't concerned about hanging with the "in" crowd. In John 4, Jesus initiates a conversation with a highly unlikely character — a Samaritan woman who had five husbands. Her gender made her culturally inferior, her race labeled her as one to be avoided and her lifestyle choices marked her as one to be condemned. But Jesus ignored all the social barriers meant to separate them because His concern wasn't for appearances; His concern was for people. All people. Hurting people. Searching people. People who make bad choices. Empty people. Because that's all of us, right?

In John 4:15, the woman refers to the hassle of returning to the well so often to quench her thirst. In the same way, she has repeatedly returned to the well of failed relationships to fill her emptiness, to quench her persistent disappointment. In John 4:13-14, Jesus offered to heal a hurt the woman didn't even realize she had. Today He offers the same for us.

“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

While we stuff ourselves on what the world offers — money, success, relationships, sex, possessions, entertainment — the satisfaction is momentary at best. Jesus offers us peace, joy, love and a relationship that is fulfilling. Jesus alone satisfies our every need, quenches our every thirst, lasts forever, and never disappoints. He approaches us in our current state and offers to meet our greatest need — the need for a Savior.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- How have you tried to fill your own emptiness with the things of the world? Just like the woman found herself returning to the well to try and fill her thirst, what sins do you find yourself returning to in an effort to fill the void in your heart?
- How have you experienced Jesus' peace, joy or love in your own life recently?

Devotion Day 5

Date: April 5 **Scriptures:** St. John 5

Follow Jesus, not a bunch of rules

Religious leaders get angry when Jesus heals a lame man on the day of rest. They get even angrier when Jesus claims to be God's Son.

For most of John 5, Jesus speaks to the Jews who criticize Him for healing the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. The Jews had rules upon rules about what good Jewish people could and could not do. One of those rules prohibited any kind of work on the Sabbath. Healing was work and, according to their rules, should be saved for the other six days of the week. Allow the absurdity of that to sink in. The religious Jews were essentially saying, "How dare you perform a miraculous healing in defiance of the Jewish law! How dare you change this man's life on the Sabbath! How dare you end his 38 years of suffering! That can surely wait until tomorrow."

Jesus continues to call them out in John 5:39–40, where He points out their diligent study of the Scriptures but their blatant disregard for believing them. The whole Bible is about Jesus. Even the Old Testament tells us about God's plan to send His Son to save us. The Jews knew those Scriptures well, but failed to recognize Jesus as their fulfillment.

“Very truly I tell you whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

If we aren't careful, we, too, can turn our relationship with Jesus into a bunch of rules we follow, a bunch of words we read, and a bunch of songs we sing. By doing so, we can completely miss Jesus and the miracles He is doing all around us.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- How has Jesus performed healing in your life?
- Why is it our tendency to make our relationship with Jesus a checklist of good behaviors? What changes can you make today to break that cycle?

Devotion Day 6

Date: April 6 Scriptures: St. John 6

Do you have everything you need?

Jesus feeds 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish, walks on water across stormy seas in the middle of the night, and follows that up by declaring to a crowd of people that in order to live they must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

To be honest, John 6 can be a little scary. Not because Jesus talks about eating flesh and blood, but because it is hard to accept. Many in the crowd felt the same, “from this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him” (John 6:66).

Walking on water and making bread join a long list of miracles along with raising people from the dead and opening blind eyes. Jesus’ miracles and His controversial “eat my flesh” statement all convey the same message: Jesus is the point. In this life and the next, we can never be satisfied apart from Jesus. And on the opposite end of that spectrum, if we have nothing but Jesus, we have everything.

“Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty’” (John 6:35).

It is understandable why some walked away. They didn’t want to surrender everything to Jesus. Some people probably wanted a show, to be a part of something powerful, or to have a need met. Their world was similar to our world today: looking for more money, more things, more options and more religion. More was the focus of their desires, actions and attitudes.

Jesus spoke in direct contrast, saying “I am” the answer. Jesus did not come to leave us wanting; He came to give us everything. He is everything. Like Peter, we can say with joy, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What, if anything, are you scared to surrender to Jesus? Is anything in your life holding you back from a 100 percent commitment to Him?
- Do you think you are living a full life? Why or why not? Ask God if He wants to change the way you live.

Devotion Day 7
Corporate Worship Day

Date: April 7

Prayer Focus: Pastors

As never before pastors are under attack spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Satan is doing everything possible to destroy pastors across the nation. Pastors leaving the ministry have risen to epidemic proportions. Every month 1,700 pastors leave the ministry. That's almost 55 a day!

Your pastor faces spiritual and emotional attack every day. The expectations placed on pastors are enormous. Pastors are expected to be super-Christians, powerful leaders, steadfast theologians, financial wizards and fundraisers, meet every need of every person in the church, work 60-70 hours a week, and maintain the perfect home life.

Satan knows that as the pastor goes, so goes the church. If he can destroy pastors, then he can ruin churches. Every year 7,000 churches close their doors. As never before your pastor needs people like you praying for him.

On today, pray for all Pastors and families:

- Protection
- Restored joy
- Rest and Freshness
- Strength, Holy Spirit Power and Anointing
- Provision and financial abundance
- Vision and direction from God

6:00 a.m. Conference Prayer only. Attend Worship Service: 8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m., or 12:00 noon.

If you cannot attend because of illness or work, view services LIVE via streaming at www.CitadelofPraise.org or view by downloading Citadel's mobile app on iTunes or google play.

Devotion Day 8

Date: April 8 Scriptures: St. John 8

Who you know matters more than what you know

When religious leaders bring an adulterous woman to Jesus for judgment, it becomes a lesson in not judging others. Jesus goes on to explain He is the eternal Son of God and they are illegitimate children.

Using the name God gave Himself in Exodus 3:14, Jesus makes an audacious claim: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58)! Jewish leaders heard this statement and became so angry they wanted Jesus dead. The Pharisees were considered the ultimate authority on God’s Word by the nation of Israel and had an incredible knowledge of the Scriptures. Jesus brushed off their personal attacks and reminded the Jewish leaders that they may know the Scripture but they do not know God.

**“‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered,
‘before Abraham was born, I am’” (John 8:58)!**

What a dangerous place to be — to know the Bible cover to cover yet not know God. In John 8, the Jewish leaders knew enough of the Bible to debate Jesus but failed to apply it to their lives. Reading and applying the Bible should always point us to Jesus. Knowing Jesus is more important than knowing Scripture.

When we know Scripture and apply it, we look like Jesus at the beginning of chapter 8. We shield the helpless, forgive the sinful, offer hope in hopeless situations, and rebuke self-righteousness. When Scripture is applied, it points us to Jesus instead of preparing us for debate.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- While reading your Bible today and over the next few weeks, begin your time by asking God to meet with you and allow you to know Him, not just His words.
- Is there a verse or idea from today’s reading you can apply to your life right now? How can learning about Jesus through the Bible change your actions and attitude?

Devotion Day 9

Date: April; 9 Scriptures: St. John 9

What has Jesus done for you?

Jesus meets a blind man and heals him with a combination of dirt, spit, and the Holy Spirit. When the man's neighbors learn about his healing, religious leaders come to Jesus looking for answers.

Can you imagine living with absolutely no vision? Your view of the world would be the images someone has patiently painted in your mind.

John 9 describes a man blind since birth. Some of Jesus' disciples assumed the blindness had been brought on by sin, maybe his or maybe even the sin of his parents. Jesus assured them that the man's troubles had not been caused by sin, but "...so the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).

If you were blind, wouldn't you be willing to try just about anything to be radically healed? Can't you see yourself thinking, "Cover my eyes with a fresh mud pie made out of spit? Good plan!" Because that's exactly what Jesus did. After covering the man's eyes with mud Jesus told him to go wash his face. In an instant, his dark world became light.

"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5).

Religious leaders overlooked the healing miracle because they wanted to ensure it happened according to their regulations. Was this the same man who had been blind, the beggar? If so, who had healed him? Didn't Jesus know He wasn't supposed to heal people on the Sabbath? Their interrogation ended abruptly with the former blind man proclaiming, "I was blind, but now I see!" (John 9:25)

Everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior has a before and after story. If you've gone from darkness to light, your story has been written so the works of God might be displayed in you. Your story is just as miraculous as the one in John 9. You were blind, and now you see.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Who do you need to share your story with today?
- If you haven't given your life to Jesus, today is the perfect day.

Devotion Day 10

Date: April 10 Scriptures: St. John 10

Why working harder doesn't make you happier

Jesus compares Himself to a good shepherd who feeds and cares for His sheep. Tired of Jesus' metaphors, religious leaders corner Jesus at the temple and ask Him directly: Are you the Christ?

How can we live abundant lives? We all want that, don't we? But we can't answer how until we focus on the more important question: What — or who — is the source of abundant life?

Jesus says in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Chasing anything other than Jesus will steal what God has blessed you with, kill your dreams, and destroy your purpose in life. Only Jesus can restore the blessings that have been stolen, bring life to dreams that have died, and give our lives purpose. Possessions come and go, as does the enjoyment they bring. The only way to experience joy that never leaves is to have something that cannot fail. An abundant life comes from Jesus, who never fails.

**"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.
They will come in and go out, and find pasture" (John 10:9).**

When a reporter asked John D. Rockefeller how much money was enough to make him happy, the millionaire replied, "Just one dollar more." Nothing on Earth is ever going to satisfy us. But if you ask anyone who has made Jesus the Lord of their life, they will tell you that they are blessed beyond anything they could have ever asked or imagined. A life apart from Jesus will always leave you lacking, but a life centered on Jesus is full of abundance.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What do you strive for in life? How does what you strive for differ from what Jesus strived for?
- What are some common traps that keep us from living the full life Jesus promised?

Devotion Day 11

Date: April 11 Scriptures: St. John 11

Jesus, where are you?

Jesus' friend Lazarus falls ill, but by the time Jesus reaches Lazarus' house, it's too late. Jesus weeps for His friend then raises Lazarus from the dead!

Have you ever wondered about God's timing? You're not alone. Some of Jesus' close friends did, too. When Lazarus became deathly ill, his sisters, Mary and Martha, asked Jesus for help. They knew Jesus was traveling and His ministry was growing, but He was a close friend. Surely He could take a few minutes to heal their brother. But Jesus didn't show up. Two days later when He arrived, it was too late. Lazarus was dead.

Martha and Mary were not only grief stricken, but deeply troubled by Jesus' apparent lack of concern. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again' (John 11:21–23). Even hearing Jesus' words, the sisters were probably wondering, "Lord, what are You thinking now?!"

"Whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (John 11:26).

As they traveled to Lazarus' four-day-old gravesite, Martha questioned Jesus' timing again. His response to her was clear, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" After thanking God Jesus called out loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" And he did. Lazarus, still wrapped in strips of linen, but fully alive, walked out of the tomb (John 11:38-44).

Maybe you've questioned Jesus' timing. You knew exactly when He needed to show up and what He needed to do, but it didn't work out the way you had planned. Even when we don't understand, He can be trusted.

Isaiah 55:8–9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Have you ever doubted God's timing? What did you learn from that situation?
- If you're unsure about God's plan or timing in a situation now, would you surrender it to Him? How could trusting God's timing change your thoughts and attitude about your circumstance?

Devotion Day 12

Date: April 12 Scriptures: St. John 12

Would you give it all?

Mary washes Jesus' feet with perfume. The next day, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey as crowds praise Him. Jesus explains why He's going to die and makes a plea for the Jews to believe.

What would you consider your most valuable possession? Maybe it's a car, a family heirloom, a computer, or a house. We all have things that we value and take great care to keep. In the beginning of John 12, we see the thing Mary considered precious — a bottle of expensive perfume. This perfume was not just a fragrance to Mary. It was worth nearly a year's wages. Mary wasn't just saving this perfume for a special day. This bottle was her financial security.

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3).

In an act of worship, Mary poured her perfume onto Jesus' feet. She knelt to the ground and washed His feet, ignoring the opinions of others. Mary gave radically. She gave not knowing if she'd be able to live through the day, but trusting Jesus anyway. She gave with such extravagance that the disciples told her she'd given too much.

To put Mary's situation in today's terms, it would be like going to church next Sunday, feeling called to give, and writing a check for your entire year's salary! Yet, this is the same way God gave to us. He gave His best when He gave us Jesus. God not only calls us to radical faith, He calls us to radical giving.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What's holding you back from pouring your security out at Jesus' feet? How does this chapter show us that we can trust Him with what's most precious to us?
- Is there anything in your life you have not given to God?

Devotion Day 13

Date: April 13 **Scriptures:** St. John 13

This is what forgiveness looks like

Jesus washes His disciples' feet, and they share one last meal together. Jesus warns Peter about the separation to come, but Peter doesn't understand.

We've all had to wrestle with forgiveness. We can't escape hurt feelings or being wronged, and neither could Jesus. In John 13, Jesus models forgiveness in a way that doesn't allow us to hold grudges. He is sitting at the table with His disciples, fully aware that Judas and Peter are about to betray Him.

Jesus' forgiveness extends beyond simply saying "I forgive you." Forgiveness is not just something He says; it's something He puts into action. Jesus kneels and serves them as He washes their feet, including Judas and Peter. He makes no exceptions. He offers His forgiveness to everyone, no matter what they have done or will do.

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15).

It's easy read this chapter and be amazed that these men sat at the table with Jesus then turned their backs on Him. We can wonder how Jesus offers forgiveness to men like this, but falsely believe we cannot do the same to the people that have hurt us.

The game changer is realizing we are the same as the men at the table with Jesus. We are the ones who deny Him, and He washes our feet. We were far from God, denying Him with our life and deserting Him in our choices, yet He still came for us. That kind of grace cannot stop with the one who benefits from it — we must extend grace, too.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Have you accepted Jesus' forgive- ness in your own life? Are there things you can't believe Jesus would ever forgive you for?
- To whom in your life do you need to extend forgiveness? How can you forgive that person today?

Devotion Day 14
Corporate Worship Day

Date: April 14

Prayer Focus: Family

Family is one of the most important things to God’s heart. No matter where you go, you are not by yourself. You carry with you a part of the past generation and the future generations. “Every deed has a seed” In other words the deeds you choose to do in this lifetime create a seed for future generations.

I often hear the story of great-great-grandmothers who prayed for her children, grandchildren and future generations while she was on her death-bed. I wonder how many times we’ve coasted on the prayers of someone else. What a sweet blessing and what an amazing heritage.

Imagine how our culture might change if we as parents and grandparents would spend more time praying for our families. And here’s the scary thing: If we don’t pray for our children and grandchildren, who will?

My prayer is that I will be as faithful as those who came before me. I hope our children and grandchildren will remember a mama, daddy, and grandmother who loved Jesus, loved them and prayed for them. How about you?

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

6:00 a.m. Conference Prayer only. Attend Worship Service: 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., or 12:00 noon.

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Devotion Day 15

Date: April 15 **Scriptures:** St. John 15

Does your life need some pruning?

Continuing His parting words to His friends, Jesus explains that the way to stay connected to God is by following His example. He also warns that they will be hated and misunderstood.

Pruning is the process of cutting limbs from a plant to keep it healthy and productive. If there are branches that are not producing any fruit, they will be cut off completely. As we follow Jesus, we also require pruning in order to grow and change.

Love is a fruit. Patience, kindness, gentleness, joy, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control are all fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). These characteristics are evident in people who are connected to Jesus, the vine.

What others see is a reflection of what’s going on inside of us. As a follower of Jesus, others should see fruit in your life. If you are not seeing fruit in your life, maybe it’s time to connect with Jesus. Get connected to the source that will give you abundant life and produce that fruit in you.

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4).

If you are in a season of pruning, it is because you are connecting to Jesus. You are growing, you are changing, and Jesus is making you into something more beautiful, something richer and better than what you already are. Jesus is not content with letting you stay the way you are — He wants more for you. He wants the absolute best for your life! 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” Jesus cares for you, and although the process may be painful and uncomfortable, He is not OK with letting you stay where you are when something more beautiful is waiting. Jesus will perfect you because He is concerned for you.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Is there evidence of fruit in your life?
- What are some practical ways to stay connected and growing in a relationship with Jesus?

Devotion Day 16

Date: April 16 Scriptures: St. John 16

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Jesus teaches His friends about the Holy Spirit and His role in their lives. He also teaches them the power of praying in His name.

In this world we will have trouble — that’s a given. But there is hope! In John 16, Jesus explains to the disciples that while He would be leaving this earth, they would not be left alone. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. He is our comforter, our peace, our strength, and our teacher. That was part of God’s plan from the beginning. The Holy Spirit is ready and available to be part of anyone and everyone’s life. God did not leave us to navigate life in this world on our own.

**“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes,
he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).**

Depending on your background, you may find the thought of the Holy Spirit weird or even scary. But the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, and God only gives good gifts. The Holy Spirit’s main role is to bring us comfort, encouragement, and understanding.

God sent the Holy Spirit to lead us and comfort us. The Holy Spirit corrects us and lets us know when we need to address sin in our lives. He guides us, nudges us, and leads us as we take our next steps in faith. The Holy Spirit also reveals truth to us, truth that brings about change in our hearts, our minds, and our character as we seek Him and obey Him. He brings us peace, comfort, and strength. He is our companion.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- Is there something the Holy Spirit is nudging you about? Do you have a next step to take or a sin that needs to be addressed?
- Do you trust the Holy Spirit and believe that He is always with you? Why or why not?

Devotion Day 17

Date: April 17 **Scriptures:** St. John 17

Who do you pray for?

Before heading to His death, Jesus stops and prays for Himself, His friends, and all of us who would believe in Him in the future.

If you want to know what someone thinks about God, listen to their prayers. Do they ask God only for wealth and possessions, or for others' salvation? Do they appeal for God's intervention like they would present a business proposal or as a child petitioning their father?

In John 17, we're allowed to eavesdrop on one of Jesus' prayers. Although it is only moments before He will be betrayed, beaten and crucified, Jesus takes time to pray on behalf of His disciples. He shows His heartfelt concern, not only for the men He has taught for years but for those who would later hear His message, including you.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:20-21).

The intimacy and familiarity with which Jesus speaks to God is evident. For eternity, even before “the foundation of the world,” Jesus and God the Father have shared a perfect loving relationship. Through Jesus, we get to enter into their perfect loving union. You have received eternal life and restoration to a loving and intimate relationship with God through Jesus.

God is not far off, and Jesus' concern for you is not distant. He prayed for you. Even today, the Son resides next to the Father, continuing to appeal on your behalf (1 John 2:1). Today, thank God for allowing you to enter into a completely loving relationship with Him through Jesus.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- How are you encouraged by the fact that Jesus prayed for you?
- How can your confidence in God's love for you affect your actions, even in the face of those who hate you (John 17:14)?

Devotion Day 18

Date: April 18 **Scriptures:** St. John 18

Where do you turn when everything goes wrong?

Religious leaders arrest Jesus and take Him to the high priest for questioning. Peter follows behind and denies knowing Jesus. After holding their own hearing, the Jews press charges against Jesus in the Roman court.

Some days alarms don't go off, cars won't start, and nothing goes as planned. But those mishaps pale in comparison to moments when we lose a job, lose our spouses, or lose our health to an incurable illness. Our future is unforeseen.

The scene in John 18 is an unimaginable disaster. Jesus is betrayed by one of His closest friends. He is arrested and bound by a band of officers and soldiers, then interrogated and treated like a criminal. Seemingly, everything had gone wrong.

**“For this purpose I was born and for this purpose
I have come into the world” (John 18:37 ESV).**

But in reality, everything was going according to plan. John makes it clear that Jesus was not a victim of circumstance, but in complete control. Jesus foretold these events. He turned himself over to them “knowing all that would happen to him” (John 18:4), and He declared to Pilate, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world” (John 18:37 ESV). How could Jesus continue to submit to the situation? He trusted in God's perfect plan.

In the same way Jesus trusted in the goodness of the Father despite His circumstances, we can trust that God is in complete control over every aspect of our lives. Even when events are outside of our control, we can rest assured that God is graciously orchestrating everything for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Today, thank God for His goodness and His authority over all circumstances. Ask Him to help you remember this truth in the face of any difficulty.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- How does knowing God is in control of all things change how you see the difficulties in your own life?

Devotion Day 19

Date: April 19 Scriptures: St. John 19

Jesus did what we could not

Jesus is flogged and crucified. He dies on a cross and is buried in a nearby tomb.

Right before Jesus took His last breath, He spoke the words, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

“It is finished” (John 19:30).

In His three years of ministry, Jesus completed the task set before Him. He voluntarily chose to sacrifice Himself, knowing His death would pay the penalty for our sin and create a way for us to become right with God and have a relationship with God. We were born sinful and separated from God. Accepting that Jesus is our Savior is the only way we are able to restore that relationship. Jesus finished what we could not.

Jesus died so we could believe. John tells us that this testimony of Jesus was given, “so that you also may believe” (John 19:35). The events of Jesus’ death on the cross were recorded based on an eyewitness testimony. You and I were not there to see this with our own eyes, but someone did see these things and recorded them. God gave us someone tangible to believe in by sending His son, Jesus, here to Earth. Jesus gave His life to make a way for us to have life (John 10:10).

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What one area of your life seems too overwhelming to finish? What strength can you find from Jesus?
- Jesus said that Peter would deny Him, but later come back to follow Christ (Luke 22:31-34). Do you carry the fear that Jesus is surprised by your sin? What does it mean to you to know that Jesus loves you despite what you have done or will do?

Devotion Day 20

Date: April 20 **Scriptures:** St. John 20

You can start over

Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' followers, goes to His tomb only to find that He's not there! Jesus appears to Mary and several others, fulfilling all that He had said about rising from the dead.

Our culture loves the idea that anybody can begin a new life. We watch reality television shows that make us believe we can all become an instant celebrity. We love the American dream because it tells us that we can be anything we want to if we try hard enough. But the reality is we have no hope of changing ourselves. The only way we can put away sinful habits is through a relationship with Jesus made possible by His death and resurrection.

On the cross, Jesus clothed Himself in our sin. When Peter and John looked into the empty tomb, they saw Jesus was not there and He had left His burial clothes. John 20 shows us that Jesus left our sinful nature in the grave when He rose from the dead.

“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

We do not have to be controlled by our desire to sin. Not only do we not have to be clothed in sin, the resurrection means we get to be clothed in something better. In Colossians 3:12, Paul says, “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Following Jesus allows us to put away our old lives and begin new ones.

- What can you learn about Jesus from this chapter?
- What old habits do you need to do away with?
- What is one thing Jesus wants you to start doing?

Day 21

THE FINAL DAY

Date: April 21 YOU MADE IT!!!

Take a few minutes to look over your prayer requests for this fast. Where has God already moved? Where has He changed your mind? What has yet to be answered? What do you need to give to Him today and trust that He will answer? How do you know Him better today than you did 21 days ago?

As we wrap up this season of prayer and fasting and you haven't seen God move yet, just give it to Him and trust that He knows what's best. Yield your request and all the circumstances surrounding it to God and then go on with life. We must trust Him when He says yes. We must trust Him when he says no. We must trust Him when he says wait. And we must trust Him even when He says nothing. If you haven't seen an answer, don't take that as a rejection or He hasn't heard your request. He has heard you and is working to bring about the best for you. But know this about God's power in your life. While He has the power to do many miraculous things in your life, the greatest miracle He has ever worked is healing you from the deadliest disease known to man...sin. He has brought all of us back from the dead. NEVER lose sight of that miracle!

Every single recorded miracle in the Bible had one goal...point people to a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. So if you're discouraged...don't doubt Him. He has already healed you. If your rejoicing...thank Him. He has healed you. And if you're still waiting...trust Him. He loves you.

6:00 a.m. Conference Prayer only. Attend Easter Worship Service: 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., or 12:00 noon

If you cannot attend, view services LIVE via streaming at www.CitadelofPraise.org or view by downloading Citadel's mobile app on iTunes or google play.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to fall upon our church and services.

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