

It's time for the church to arise!

Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.

See then that you walk circumspectly,
not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time,
because the days are evil. **(Eph 5:14-15)**

Happy new year! Hope is a confident expectation. I anticipate that 2025 will be a year where we as a people are waking up to the promise and power of God. We will awaken spiritually, emotionally, and physically. God is always working. He's working even when we don't see it; even when we don't feel it. I'm believing that he is going to set a fire down in our soul that we can't contain and we can't control. We don't always see him; and, quite frankly, it's because we're sleeping. We get tired when we're driving. We get tired when we're watching TV. We get tired after we eat, but spiritually we must be awakened.

God is on the move and this 31 days of prayer and fasting is an opportunity for us to shake off the slumber and the unwillingness to sacrifice while putting on the whole armor of God, and to develop our character as a church family. We need to awaken our ability to gather, grow and to go, because obedience opens the door to growth and transformation. Christians who refuse to grow personally may think that they are maintaining, but a congregation that is only maintaining is going backwards. I'm calling all of my friends and family to wake up. This is perhaps a year, where you and I can grow leaps and bounds, expanding His reign and rule in our lives, so it will manifest in our

community. Ephesians chapter 5 says that we should live out our faith rather than imitate the world or be controlled by worldly things. Christians are to be filled and led by the Spirit - to as many that are led by the Spirit, they are the children of God.

I'm committed to shaking off areas in my life that have been sleeping. Will you join me in pressing in to God and allowing him to take us to new heights? We must never get weary in well doing; and by us waking up and, arising, we come alive! We will see a revival in our country as we've never seen.

Together, we are better!

Long live the King!

Pastor David S. Ferranti

Fasting

We have chosen to encourage our church family to set aside the first 31 days of 2025 for prayer and fasting. This is a time to seek the Lord for direction in our personal lives and as well as in the ministry of Bay Valley Christian Church. We believe that as we set aside time to earnestly seek what God has for each of us that we open the door for Him to show up in our lives and the life of the ministry in incredible ways. We have combined the time of fasting with a 31-day devotional to help focus our attention during these daily times with Him.

Why Fast?

The goal of fasting is to draw closer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose. Fasting essentially hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things He desires to bring into our lives. Our personal fast presents a level of challenge to us to neglect the things that our bodies want or desire and to replace those things or time with seeking God in prayer and following what the Holy Spirit leads us to do. Fasting can be summed up as seeking the Lord and allowing His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Types of Fasts

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

1. Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you would drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

2. Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

3. Partial Fast

This fast involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

4. Soul Fast

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

Scripture References:

Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 27:33-37; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Isaiah 58:5-14

Set Your Personal Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, or for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15). For Him it was a matter of *when* believers would fast, not *if* they would do it. Before you fast, decide which options you will choose:

How long you will fast – one meal, one day, a week, all 31 days.

The type of fast God wants you to undertake.

Day 1

Set a Fire - Action Required

'To Set a Fire' requires three things: action, a spark or flame, and fuel to burn. Spiritually, these three things are seeking Jesus, turning our hearts to Him, and living by The Word.

Praxis is the Greek word for action, which means "to practice" or "to do." We have a choice every day, either to live in the kingdom of man or to enter the Kingdom of God. Through the blood of Jesus, we can come to the altar on a daily basis.

Hebrews 10: 19-25 "And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

Pray: May you choose today to come to the altar and enter the Kingdom of God.



Song: O Come to the Altar, by Elevation Worship

Set a Fire - the Spark

Hebrews 10: 22a: Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him.

We were created, by God, for a relationship with Him. The key to that relationship is our hearts. Our heart is the spark, or flame, required to 'Set a Fire'. He wants our hearts to be fully devoted to Him.

Ezekiel 36:26 states: "And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart."

We have a daily choice to either stay in the kingdom of man or to enter the Kingdom of God. If we choose to stay in the kingdom of man, our hearts can become hard and selfish. If we choose to enter the Kingdom of God, our hearts burn for a relationship with God and to serve His people.

John 1:1: "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus is the Word. In **Matthew 22:37-39**, Jesus shares the greatest two commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

Pray: Give all of your heart and soul and mind to God as you choose to enter His Kingdom. May your soul burn to serve Him and His people.



Day 3

Set a Fire - the Fuel

The third thing required to 'Set a Fire' is fuel, which is the Word. The Word referred to here is both the Scriptures and Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

We will all go through trials and tribulations where it feels like everything is going against us, that our flame will be extinguished. To keep the flame burning and to triumph over the enemy we must stay rooted in The Word. It provides comfort in the storm and guidance when we need instruction.

If it feels like you have been thrown into a fire by the kingdom of man, let us not forget **Daniel 3:25** "'Look!' Nebuchadnezzar shouted. 'I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!'" This is a prophecy of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The fire of the Kingdom of God is greater than the kingdom of man. As you read scripture, read it through the lens of Jesus Christ, who was there at the beginning and will be there, with us, in the end.

Pray: May you enter the Kingdom of God daily, by staying rooted in The Word.



Song: Another in the Fire, by Hillsong United

Day 4

Make Us a House of Prayer

The scripture written over the worship center entryway at Bay Valley Christian Church in Bay City makes an important statement. In **Matthew 21:13**, Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Here Jesus revealed our eternal identity and destiny as the body of Christ. As believers, we all may not be called to preach, but we are all called to pray. "House of prayer" not only reveals our name but also our function as the church for eternity. Our greatest identity, authority, honor, and destiny is to be found in prayer.

Consider these three entities that function as a house of prayer. First, our bodies are a house of prayer - the temple of the Holy Spirit that practices the presence of God 24/7. Second, our homes should be a house of prayer with a daily established family altar of prayer and worship. Third, Jesus said, "My House." The local community, and His worldwide body, have the distinct characteristic of prayer being the center of all ministry.

During this month, let us build an ongoing lifestyle of prayer simultaneously in all these areas, as we contend and stand in the gap for our personal transformation and that of our church, city, and nation.

Pray: Let your kingdom come, let your will be done right here on earth as it is in heaven.
In Jesus name!



Song: Make us a House of Prayer, by Daniel Brymer

Day 5

When You Fast

Matt 6:17-18 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus gave us the culture of the kingdom – when you pray, when you give, and when you fast. He didn't say, "if." Fasting is an expression of humility and voluntary weakness. God gives grace to the humble and strength to the weak. It's also an expression of spiritual hunger (no pun intended). They that hunger and thirst shall be filled.

We fast to posture our hearts before God, not to earn anything by works. Scripture says, "When you fast, He sees in secret and will reward you openly." This reveals that He honors your sacrifice when done in obedience with pure motives.

Let's push the plate aside and carve time in our schedules to be with Jesus. Let's ask for God's direction in this new year with a new level of authority to manifest and enlarge the kingdom.

Pray: Father, give us grace to embrace this fast, not as a ritual that we do every January, but to bring us into a deeper relationship of unity, communion, maturity, and obedience in our God-given assignments. In Jesus name!



Song: "I Surrender", by Hillsong Worship

Keep Your Spiritual Edge Sharp

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

As believers, we are called to live a life of purpose and passion for God. However, in today's fast-paced world, it's easy to lose our spiritual edge. We can become dull and complacent, struggling to make a meaningful impact for the Kingdom. In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to lose our spiritual edge. Just as a knife needs to be sharpened regularly to maintain its effectiveness, our spiritual edge needs to be constantly honed. Here are a few ways to keep your spiritual edge sharp:

1. Regularly seek God's presence.
2. Surround yourself with people who sharpen you.
3. Engage in spiritual disciplines such as fasting, journaling, and serving others.
4. Stay accountable.
5. Embrace challenges and trials.

This is a lifelong process that requires commitment, discipline, and a willingness to be challenged and refined. But the reward is worth it—a life of purpose, passion, and impact for the Kingdom.

Pray: Dear God, I want to live a life of purpose and passion for You. Help me to keep my spiritual edge sharp. I pray that You would refine me and make me a sharper instrument for Your Kingdom. Amen

Day 7

God's Unwavering Faithfulness

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

As we navigate the twists and turns of life, it's easy to get caught up in uncertainty and doubt. But in the midst of chaos, there is one thing that remains constant: God's faithfulness.

In Deuteronomy 7:9, we are reminded that God is a faithful God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). His faithfulness is not dependent on our circumstances or our actions. It is a fundamental aspect of His character.

God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His covenant-keeping love. He has promised to love and care for us, and He is faithful to keep those promises. Throughout the Bible, we see examples of God's faithfulness to His people, even when they were unfaithful to Him.

So, what does God's faithfulness mean for us? It means that we can trust Him, no matter what. We can rely on His promises and know that He will always come through. It means that we can face uncertainty with confidence, knowing that God is always with us.

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your unwavering faithfulness. Help us to trust in your promises and to rely on your covenant-keeping love. May we experience your faithfulness in every area of our lives. Amen.

Wholeheartedness

Jeremiah 29:13-14 "If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you." says the Lord.

The Bible gives many examples of people whose prayers were answered when they cried out to the Lord in desperation. The woman with the issue of blood who had searched for answers for 12 years and spent all the money she had, is one story where desperation caused her to push through the crowd to touch the hem of His garment. And she was healed!

It's often the same in our lives. When we have a major life crisis, we seek the Lord like never before, and He answers! He loves us so much; and He delights in meeting our greatest needs.

It can be challenging to chase hard after God when things are going great. But what if we learned to search for Him "wholeheartedly" during our normal daily lives? What if we become desperate for His Presence - to know Him more?

The Lord fulfilled great promises in Caleb's life because Caleb loved the Lord "wholeheartedly." (Joshua 14) The verse in Jeremiah tells us that if we do the same, we WILL find Him!

Pray: Lord, thank you for your patience with me. Thank you for loving me first. Please teach me to seek You out, like never before. Help me to grow in my desperation for Your Presence! Amen.

Day 9

He Has Given Me Power!

Philippians 2:13-14 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing.

At first glance, it sounds like God is the one responsible for the majority of the "work" in our hearts. It is exciting to think that He gives us the desire AND the power to please Him! However, as we look deeper, He is really giving us the tools we need to be obedient to His will for our lives. He always does His part, and we are responsible for doing our part.

As we mature in our relationship with the Lord, we begin to see that He has plans and purposes for our lives. He deposits into us the Holy Spirit to give direction and the ability to follow the path He has for us. He also gives us the free will to obey Him - or not.

Though God provided everything the Israelites needed when He delivered them from Egypt, they complained and argued. They ended up dying in the wilderness because of their disobedience.

If we truly want to walk in power and do what pleases Him, we must start with obedience followed by a great attitude towards God and our fellow man. Let's start today!

Pray: Lord teach me to be sensitive to Your Spirit and follow Your promptings in my life. Remind me of all the good things You have done for me and to respond with obedience. Amen

Day 10

Set a Fire to Your Prayer Life

The Bible says you should ALWAYS be doing this: Rejoice evermore (**1 Thes. 5:16**) and to pray without ceasing (**1 Thes 5:17**)

In God's revelation to John, John describes what he saw taking place around the throne of God and before the Lamb of God. Angels, kings, and elders delivered "golden bowls of incense" (your prayers) to the Lamb of God. The Bible says that your prayers are sweet incense that rise up before the Lord - delivered by kings in the most important of precious golden vessels, accompanied by worship and music.

God looks at your prayers like golden bowls of incense....ushered in with great anticipation before Jesus Christ Himself. Please, take hold of this thought. Ponder it, grasp it. He wants your attention, your prayers, and your heart. Be connected with God. Remember, your thought life is the gateway to your walk life.

Pray: Ask God to touch your heart and mind and give you a revelation of HOW MUCH you mean to Him.



Day 11

The Power of Unity

Samson, a man God blessed with supernatural power and strength, tied 300 foxes into pairs, two-by-two, and lit ablaze torches attached to their tails to wreak havoc in the cities and fields of his enemies, the Philistines.

Think about the power of a team - the power of unity. Jesus wants to yoke you together with other believers and empower you with purpose to accomplish amazing and great things.

Jesus gathered His disciples, taught them, poured into them, lit them ablaze with the power of the Holy Spirit, paired them together, and commanded them to go forth and wreak havoc on the Devil's kingdom and in all the world.

What is God calling you to do? Who has God put in your life that is elevating, partnering and blessing you? God blessed Adam with Eve, and said that man needed a companion, a partner; and then commanded them to be fruitful and faithful together.

God always gives you what you need for the job He's asked you to do.

Pray: Lord, show me how to walk in unity with You and with other believers.

Dedication

Hebrews 10:39 But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

Rise to the Challenge! The best things in life are worth fighting for!! Remember that EFFORT is the universal language of love. God promises that persevering through challenges will produce good character and virtue that bring life and hope into your life!

The best soldier is one who gives ALL or 100% and continues to strive forward, despite obstacles and fear. They push harder and harder, far beyond their limits. They study their enemy - know every move, tendency, weapon, and procedure of their foe.

Is Christianity any different? Doesn't it require the same level of effort and energy?

How will you handle being a Christian? How serious are you? Are you just going to be someone riding the pine, comfortable and content on the bench, or the hunter sleeping in the tree stand? Are you the bad-attitude doubter and the one who is negative on your team? Have you become complacent with your enemy and struggle to take the mission/the race seriously?

Remember to seek first His Kingdom and live righteously - put God first, make Him your biggest priority, and all the less important things will be given to you with abundance!

Pray: Ask God to help you put your heart and soul into every activity you do, as though you are doing it for the Lord himself. (Colossians 3:23)

Power in Weakness

2 Corinthians 12:9 But the Lord said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Have you ever felt like your passion and excitement for God have dwindled? Like the flames that once burned bright have dimmed to a flicker?

In the scripture above, Paul writes about a time when he asked God to remove his weaknesses, but God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." God didn't take away Paul's weaknesses, but instead, He offered grace. And in that grace, Paul found strength.

When we feel like our fire has gone out, we need to remember that God's grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in our weakness.

So, how do we set a fire in our souls again?

- We acknowledge our weaknesses and ask for God's grace.
- We seek His strength and power in our lives.
- We trust that His grace is enough, even when we feel weak.

As we do this, God will set a fire in our souls, a fire that burns bright and true. A fire that fuels our passion and excitement for Him.

Let's embrace our weaknesses and ask God to set a fire in our souls today.

Pray: God, I acknowledge my weaknesses and ask for Your grace. Set a fire in my soul, and let Your power be made perfect in me. Amen.

Passion

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Do you remember the last time you felt a burning passion for God? When your heart was on fire for Him, and nothing could extinguish the flames? In the verse above, Paul urges us to never lack zeal or spiritual fervor. He reminds us to keep serving the Lord with enthusiasm and dedication. But how do we maintain this passion? How do we keep the fire burning bright?

- We prioritize our relationship with God, making time for Him every day.
- We seek His presence, hungry for more of Him in our lives.
- We serve others, sharing His love and grace with those around us.

As we do these things, God sets a fire in our souls, a fire that fuels our passion and enthusiasm for Him, a fire that burns bright and true, guiding us in our walk with Him.

Let's ask God to set a fire in our souls today, and let's keep it burning bright!

Pray: God, I want to feel Your fire in my soul. Help me prioritize our relationship, seek Your presence, and serve others. Set a fire in me, Lord! Amen.

Too Hot To Handle

Matthew 22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Have you ever seen a baby laughing uncontrollably? Have you spent time around someone who is very negative? Have you noticed that proximity to a different influence can change how you interact with the world around you? That influence can be internal, external, or both.

Picture the fire pit in your friend's backyard. To get the fire started, you have to be careful about the fuel you use. It can't be too big or too wet or too green. But once the embers are sufficiently hot, it doesn't matter what you put in the fire. New items introduced to the 'vicinity of the fire' are consumed by the fire, if they stay in its vicinity.

As you are internally influenced by the 'Redeemer's fire,' you begin to change how people around you respond to you and others. If you are on fire for God 'with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,' then just being in your vicinity can ignite someone else's passion for God!

Pray: Father God, thank You for being an all-consuming Fire. Thank You that as I open my heart to you and receive Your Love, it begins to overflow to those around me. May I always be on fire for You and fan the flames of love wherever I go, taking back territory for Your Kingdom everywhere my feet tread.

Hearts on Fire

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

Artistically, pure white is the absence of color. In other words, you can't mix colors to create white. Spiritually, white is the absence of unrighteousness. We can't get there on our own strength. So, how do we get there? How does our unrighteousness get burned away?

In fire pits, flammable items get affected by the heat of the fire. Things on the inside start bubbling to the surface and burn off. And as we go through the trials and tribulations of life, the fire, we can choose to allow God's righteousness to bring all of the things foreign to our true nature to the surface and get burned off. Basically, the fire burns away the extras and reveals what we are actually made of.

No matter what it's made of or what it looks like from the outside, once the impurities are burned off and the fire is hot enough, everything turns white. This has nothing to do with the color of someone's skin, their race or nationality. It's the heart. Let God's fire begin to purify your heart today.

Pray: Lord, thank You for loving me enough to burn away my unrighteousness with Your loving corrections. Thank You for seeking my heart and allowing me to seek Yours. Lord, I willingly submit myself to Your redeeming fire. Make me more like You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Reignite the Fire

2 Corinthians 12:9 But the Lord said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Have you ever felt like your passion and excitement for God have dwindled? Like the flames that once burned bright have dimmed to a flicker? Paul writes about a time when he asked God to remove his weaknesses, but God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." God didn't take away Paul's weaknesses; instead, He offered grace, and in that grace, Paul found strength.

When we feel like our fire has gone out, we must remember that God's grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in our weakness. So, how do we set a fire in our souls again?

- We acknowledge our weaknesses and ask for God's grace.
- We seek His strength and power in our lives.
- We trust that His grace is enough, even when we feel weak.

As we do this, God will set a fire in our souls, a fire that burns bright and true, a fire that fuels our passion and excitement for Him. Let's embrace our weaknesses and ask God to set a fire in our souls today.

Pray: God, I acknowledge my weaknesses and ask for Your grace. Set a fire in my soul, and let Your power be made perfect in me. Amen.

Praise the Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 63:4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands."

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: "Rejoice!"

Praise in the valleys and on the mountaintops! Praise during the storm and by the tranquil peaceful waters. Praise in the fierce whirlwinds and in the calm breezes by the seaside! Praise through our fear, devastation, pain, anxiety, and chaos! Praise in our gratitude, healing, peace, blessings, and in the joy of a new day! Praise the Lord, the Lion of Judah, during times of trials and tribulations when the enemy attempts to aim his fiery arrows towards us (Psalm 118:11). Praise the Lord, our Rock, Deliverer and Provider, during times of abundance and feasting (Psalms 18:2).

Praise is our greatest weapon that releases His glory in all our situations! Praise is our war cry! Give Him praise!!

Pray: Lord, may the power of the Holy Spirit be released and fall like fire upon me! May I seek Your glory and will for my life. May You burn a passion within me in the mighty name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Set a fire in my soul! I give You praise!!!



Day 19

Here or There

Ephesians 4:23 ...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

My wife and I took some long overdue time for the two of us, deciding to leave the icy grip of December and trade it in for a sun-baked island. On one of my early morning talks with the Lord, thanking God for the goodness in my life, I looked at the ocean's beauty. Though I had changed my physical location, my mind, my attitude, and my perspectives were still with me. I realized that I could be standing in paradise with a rotten attitude, or I could be standing in (what feels like) "hell," but yet my mind could be full of joy!

Sometimes we as Christians forget that our joy comes not from where our feet stand but where our heart does. Scripture tells us in Ephesians 4:23 to renew and transform our minds. It's been a few weeks since returning to cold December, yet the warmth of God's Holy Fire comforts me. It radiates from a grateful heart, and manifests itself in a physical smile, which, in turn, even warms the people around me. That's how God works! No matter where in life you happen to be standing.

Pray: Heavenly Father, let us never forget that our happiness depends not on where our feet are but where our heart is. Let our heart's desire be that you come alongside us no matter where we are. Lord, You are welcome, You are wanted, and You are our honored guest.



Song: Holy Spirit, by Jesus Culture

Day 20

Renewing Fire

Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Every spring, Native Americans who lived on the prairie plains would purposely start a grass fire. They learned that if they burned away the old dry lifeless vegetation of the prior season, it would prep the soil for new seeds to sprout. New growth would be even more abundant than if left to grow through old thatch which could choke out the new shoots.

As Christians, we can use this analogy in our spiritual walk with God. Sometimes we need to pause and reflect on what is the “dead thatch” in our past life that we should purposely ask the Holy Spirit of fire to burn away so that our hearts are fertile ground - ready for the new growth in God to be abundant!!!

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit fire! Teach us to use it as a light in the dark times of our life, as well as a purposeful fire to burn away even the oldest generational thatch in our lives so that we may experience the joy and abundance of a life spent with you, in Jesus' name. Amen.



Day 21

Falling in love with Jesus Again and Again

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

One of the greatest challenges we face as believers is to grow in our love for Jesus. The Bible calls this love our “first love.” Do you remember how special Jesus felt to you when He first saved you, when He pulled you from the pit of spiritual death, when zeal for Him burned within you? This internal fire of the Holy Spirit powers us forward in God’s plan and for His glory.

Though God initiated this love, we have a part in renewing it. The Ephesian believers were amazing for God, but over time, in all their church work, they let the most important thing slip, their passion for Jesus. We cannot let that happen. Without our first love, we become spiritually dry and lifeless—only a smoldering fire.

Forgetting God and taking Him for granted is an unfortunate common byproduct of this present evil world, and something we all have to be on guard against. Let me encourage you to keep your appreciation for Jesus simple. Without Him, you’re dead. Nothing else matters.

Pray: Lord, help me to manage the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches. I don’t want the Holy Spirit’s fire to die inside me. I want to fall in love with Jesus again and again every day! Amen!

Even in Weakness, You Can Burn Bright

There is an amazing story in 2 Kings 13 about Elijah and King Joash. Elijah is finishing his life; he is weak and dying. Israel is in trouble with the oppressive nations around her, especially Syria. Elijah took a bow and placed it in the hand of the King. Elijah then placed his hand on the King's hand, and said, "Strike the ground with the bow." He did not tell King Joash how many times to strike the ground. Joash struck the ground three times. Elijah got mad. He said, "You should have hit the ground five or six times!" Israel would go on to have victory, but not as vast of a victory as they could have had if Joash had put a little more zeal or "spiritual boot" to the enemy.

This account is amazing. We see a feeble, dying prophet of God, weak in body, struggling to function, still burning inwardly with a passion for the Lord. He not only had passion, but he could also recognize a lack of passion when he saw it.

We all face weak moments. We have dry seasons spiritually. You may be facing significant discouragement. It is hard to be zealous for Jesus in difficult times, but He's with you. He has overcome the enemy for you. Stay on the side of victory and passion for the Lord going into this new year. If an Old Testament dying prophet could do that in his weakness, you who are renewed daily in Christ certainly can!

Pray: Lord, I desire to be renewed every single day. May my zeal for Jesus never falter.

Day 23

A Little Spark Can Make a Big Fire

Many times in the Bible, a passion for God is represented by fire. Did you ever notice in James Chapter 3 that a little spark can grow into a great flame? (**James 3:5**). James is saying this in a negative context against the tongue, but the principle remains the same: Little things make a big difference in the kingdom of God and in the spiritual realm.

We need to know that little decisions for God make big differences in our lives. You can make some little decisions this year which will result in big changes. Invest in your walk with God. Take a little break from your TV in the evening and pick up your Bible. Get up 15 minutes earlier to love on Jesus and pray over your day. Look for small ways to serve others. Hold back your tongue from getting the last word. Greet people with a smile. Pray for strangers and neighbors.

Every time you make a decision for God, even when it seems to be a little decision, you add a little more spiritual kindling for fire in your soul! Do that on a regular basis and you will have a blazing passion for God and set yourself up for a great year!

Pray: Heavenly Father, help me to consider You in every decision I make. Help me to break bad habits that keep me from growing closer to you. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen

The Power of Sacrifice

1 Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Romans 3:25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

Sacrifice is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sacrificed his life on the cross for the redemption of humanity. His sacrifice was not taken lightly, but it was a deliberate act of love and obedience to God. As a follower of Jesus, sacrifice is not optional, because true success in the kingdom is obedience. In our obedience, we are transformed by giving up the non-essentials and focusing on the essentials. Let 2025 be a year where we're not afraid to sacrifice - to leave our comfort and safety to say, to do, and to go. This is the mission of Bay Valley Christian Church - to gather ourselves, to grow ourselves, and to go and do what God leads.

Pray: Lord, help me to focus on what is truly important. Help me to sacrifice by putting you first and putting others' needs before mine. Give me the courage and strength to grow and to do what you require. Amen.

Putting on the Armor of God.

As believers, we are engaged in a spiritual battle that rages on every day. The enemy, Satan, seeks to destroy our faith, our family, and our witness; but we are not defenseless. In **Ephesians 6:10-18**, Paul reminds us to put on the armor of God so that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. The armor includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of salvation. With this armor we are equipped to resist the enemy's attacks and to advance the Kingdom of God.

Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil. Our weapons are not physical, but spiritual: prayer, worship, and the Word of God. Let us put on the armor of God today, and let us stand firm in the face of spiritual warfare. We are not alone; we are not powerless; we are children of God, and we have a victory through Christ Jesus! We are not victims!

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for providing me with the armor and weapons I need to live a victorious life.

Sacrifice of Praise

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him, let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name.

Singing praise to God in the midst of a trial does not come naturally. It is a discipline. It's doing it when we don't FEEL it, but praising Him anyway. When we develop the habit of turning our eyes to the Lord and praising him anyway, it opens a secret place in our heart. It's not about "sensing a strong presence of Jesus," even though we know He is always with us; it's a work that happens in our heart.

The Lord desires to be a part of our lives, and when we CALL ON HIM, He is HERE. A concerned parent will run quickly to their child when they call for help. Jesus does the same thing. He is there, ready to help us through. His Word is true!

Psalms 23:3 He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

Pray: Lord, You are a good and gracious God, worthy of praise. Thank you for caring for me, leading me, and saving me.

Day 27

You God are God!

Psalm 63:1 You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you, I thirst for you, and my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Why is it that so often we are not hungry and thirsty for God? Because the world has set before us a mirage, and we're trying everything to find peace - only to be left empty and alone. We come up empty because we are not seeking the one true God.

David expresses his deep longing for intimacy with God. We cannot cultivate that desire if we're full of the world. Thirsting for him and prioritizing our relationship with him is not optional. God says in his word in **James 4:8**: "Draw near to Him, He will draw near to you."

If I don't draw near to him and he doesn't draw near to me, I'm left to myself - an unconfident, underachiever, not able to advance myself or the kingdom. But with him all things are possible.

Pray: O Lord God, I want to be nearer to you. Draw me in. I hunger and thirst for you. Fill me as only you can. Thank you. Amen.

Drawn Near to God

When you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. The Bible says that we have bold access to come before him because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. When we draw near, he reveals himself to us, but he will also reveal ourselves to us as he begins to mold and shape our character.

Proverbs 10:9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.

Character is the foundation upon which integrity, morality and ethics is built. It is the total of our values, beliefs, and principles that guide our thoughts, words and actions. A person of good character is someone who is trustworthy, reliable, and honest. We are called to cultivate character that reflects the image of God. This requires intentional effort, self-reflection, and a willingness to submit to the transferring power of the Holy Spirit. It's not about achieving perfection, but about progressing in our pursuit of Christ-likeness.

Pray: God, May I endeavor to live a life of integrity that brings glory to you and inspires others to do the same. May my words and actions align with my beliefs. Shine your light on those areas that need transformation. I submit to you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 29

Burning but not Burnt

Acts 2:3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

In this verse, God shows us that not only is every fire not destructive, but that His Holy fire is always with us. The disciples saw the fire and knew where it came from. Moses saw the fire in the burning bush and knew the source (Exodus 3:2-5). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood in the fire unharmed (Daniel 3:20-27).

Spiritual fire is a fire that God gives each of us to carry within our hearts continuously (Leviticus 6:13). It's God's special way of manifesting His Holy presence, power and joy in our lives. When nomads would travel great distances, they would always carry a burning ember with them. They would only need to fan it for the flame to arise. That fire could sometimes be the difference between life and death. As Christians, we carry an ember of God's Holy Spirit within us. We need only fan it to make the fire burn brighter. It, too, is no less important to us in life or death.

Pray: Heavenly Father when the cold of this world makes us shiver, remind us that your Holy fire is with us continuously and we need only to fan the flame by the praises from our mouths and the humbling of our hearts. In Jesus's name, Amen.



Heartburn

Luke 24:32 They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

Don't you want that type of heartburn - not the painful physical burning, but the deep spiritual burn lit by the fire from knowing Jesus? This account in Luke 24 about the followers of Jesus who were on their way to Emmaus after the crucifixion reveals some interesting points. First, Jesus is alive! That's the most important piece of information. Second, Jesus cared enough about these two followers that he wanted to spend time with them. Third, Jesus explained the prophecies about his coming and the suffering he would experience before entering his glory.

It was only after seeing Jesus break bread with them that their eyes were opened and they realized that it was Jesus himself who was with them all this time. As they reflected on their conversations with him, they were able to identify the feelings they had as they listened to Jesus explain the scriptures.

Oh how glorious it is when we spend time with Jesus and he reveals himself to us through the scriptures. Our eyes are opened, just like the eyes of these two followers were opened. Let's seek this "heartburn" by spending time with Jesus.

Pray: O Lord, I want to spend time with you. Open my eyes. I desire a deeper relationship with you. Thank you, Jesus, for caring about me. Amen.



Day 31

His Masterpiece

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

You as an individual are an intricately crafted creation by God, considered to be His most prized work of art. His design highlights your inherent worth and beauty as a person, regardless of any flaws or imperfections.

"Fulgurite" is naturally formed glass created by lightning strikes, raw and wildly unique. The same could be said about past hurts that have struck and wounded our hearts. Over time, our hurts take on a design that God never intended. Every wildly unique hurt can be removed by the Lord, making our testimony a masterpiece.

God never created us to be complete on our own. We need to do our part by spending time with the original artisan to remove imperfections and skillfully add more brush strokes. His work is not inferior, He sees the potential we cannot grasp.

Pray: O Lord, You are welcome to finish Your work in me, make me Your masterpiece. May the Holy Spirit set a fire in me so that my softened heart will be clay in Your hands. Fill me with boldness to use my testimony to bring forth the good things You planned for me. Amen.



