

A pair of worn, brown leather work gloves is the central focus of the image. The gloves are heavily textured with creases and scuffs, suggesting frequent use. They are set against a dark, textured background that features a faint, stylized world map. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the leather and the details of the stitching.

THE TOUCH JOURNAL

Edited by Juanita Campbell Rasmus

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The Power of Forgiveness and Confession

There is nothing like a good cleanse to rid the body of unwanted toxins and waste. I remember as a little girl my maternal grandmother believed in the power of cod liver oil????? to ward off colds and virus and parasites. I was very healthy and so was every other grandchild in our family. My grandmother knew the benefits of preventive maintenance for the body; she was faithful in her diligence to do what she knew to do, so that we could enjoy a quality childhood.

Unforgiveness in the heart and mind have the same affect as colds, virus and parasites they all gently wear down the body and soul minimizing our ability to be fully functioning and vital. Just as with my grandmothers “spring cleaning” with the cod liver oil it is necessary that we consider cleaning out any unforgiveness that may be attaching itself and hindering our ability to move in the Spirit of God. The sign of the effectiveness of the cod liver oil was “movement”. The sign of praying and seeking forgiveness of ourselves and others will yield a freedom from the release of the emotional weight that is carried when we harbor unforgiveness, grudges and resentments.

Together we will take a thirty – one day journey into the realm of release and surrender as we allow the power of praying the forgiveness prayer to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is the stuff in us that is just not right, not fitting, not healthy, not wholesome, the stuff that keeps our lives with God from really working well. I want to invite you to continue this devotional through out the year perhaps use it again in the spring, summer and fall after you have had a few fresh challenges , memories and experiences that need “moving – out”. I believe that the cleaner-clearer we are the more room we have for the Holy Spirit to flow, coat and soothe our lives in rich and wonderful ways that truly reveal the power of divine love in its fullest.

HERE’S TO a New You in the New Year!!

Forgiveness – Prelude

Mark 11:25 *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

When we have asked Jesus to come into our hearts we are literally asking for a home makeover, John 14-15 speak of God abiding in us and being at home with us. The Holy Spirit comes too!

“The Holy Spirit will not let us off the hook in our broken relationships, nor will He expect us to forgive in our own power. He will do it through us, as we let Him.”

Linda Schubert, *The Miracle Hour*

I have learned that forgiveness is a decision, and I have to keep making the decision to forgive because new stuff is always coming up. This person or that has offended me or, I have made foolish choices and have to forgive myself. I have also learned that there are issues that I have to forgive God for as well. This prayer has been a constant companion in my box of prayer tools. This prayer is like a spiritual enema, it cleanses out stuffed feelings, disappointments and hurts that I didn't even know I had, until the Holy Spirit revealed them to me. Forgiveness is the key to healing and wholeness in our desire for a rich and full WITH-GOD- LIFE.

Some areas of the prayer may not apply Ex: “Spouse or Children” just continue with the prayer.

Plan to pause after reading each section to allow the Holy Spirit to bring specific people and situations to your mind.

Forgiveness Prayer

(The following prayer covers most significant areas of forgiveness and will bring to mind others. Let the Holy Spirit move freely and guide your mind to persons or groups you need to forgive.) Adapted from Frt. Robert De Grandis, SSJ.



LORD JESUS CHRIST, I ask today to forgive everyone in my life. I know that You will give me the strength to forgive and I thank You that You love me more than I love myself and want my happiness more than I desire it for myself.

Father, I forgive You for the times death has come into my family, hard times, financial difficulties, or what I thought were punishments sent by You and people said "It's God's will," and I became bitter and resentful towards You. Purify my heart and mind today.

Lord, I forgive **MYSELF** for my sins, faults and failings, and for all that is bad in myself or that I think is bad. For any delvings in superstition, using ouija boards, horoscopes, going to séances, using fortune telling or wearing lucky charms, I reject all that superstition and choose You alone as my Lord and Savior. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit.

I further forgive myself for taking Your name in vain, not worshipping You by attending church, for hurting my parents, getting drunk, fornication, adultery. You have forgiven me; today I forgive myself. Also, for abortion, stealing, lying, defrauding, hurting peoples' reputation, I forgive myself.

I truly forgive my **MOTHER**. I forgive her for all the times she hurt me, she resented me, she was angry with me and for all the times she punished me. I forgive her for the times she preferred my brothers and sisters to me. I forgive her for the times she told me I was dumb, ugly, stupid, the worst of the children or that I cost the family a lot of money. For the times she told me I was unwanted, an accident, a mistake or not what she expected, I forgive her. God, I forgive my mother for not being the mother that I needed her to be.

I forgive my **FATHER**. I forgive him for any non-support, any lack of love, affection, or attention. I forgive him for any lack of time, for not giving me his companionship, for his drinking, arguing and fighting with my mother or the other children. For his severe punishments, for desertion, for being away from home, for divorcing my mother or for any running around, I do forgive him. Heavenly Father, I choose to forgive my earthly father for not being the father I needed him to be.

Lord, I extend forgiveness to my **SISTERS AND BROTHERS**. I forgive those who rejected me, lied about me, hated me, resented me, competed for my parents' love, those who hurt me, who physically harmed me. For those who were too severe on me, punished me or made my life unpleasant in any way, I do forgive them.

Lord, I forgive my **SPOUSE** for lack of love, affection, consideration, support, attention, communication; for faults, failings, weaknesses and those other acts or words that hurt or disturb me.

Jesus, I forgive my **CHILDREN** for their lack of respect, obedience, love, attention, support, warmth, understanding; for their bad habits, falling away from the church, any bad actions which disturb me.

My God, I forgive my **IN-LAWS**, my mother-in-law, father-in-law, son/daughter-in-law and other relatives by marriage, who treat my family with a lack of love. For all their words, thoughts, actions or omissions which injure and cause pain, I forgive them.

Please help me to forgive my **RELATIVES**, my grandmother and grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins who may have interfered in our family, been possessive of my parents, who may have caused confusion or turned one parent against another.

Jesus, help me to forgive my **CO-WORKERS** who are disagreeable or make life miserable for me. For those who push their work off on me, gossip about me, won't **cooperate with me, try to take my job, I do forgive them.**

My NEIGHBORS need to be forgiven, Lord. For all their noise, letting their property run down, not tying up their dogs, who run through my yard, not taking in their trash barrels, being prejudiced and running down the neighborhood, I do forgive them.

I now forgive all priests, ministers, nuns, my parish, parish organizations, my pastor, bishop, the Pope, and the church for their lack of support, affirmation, bad sermons, pettiness, lack of friendliness, not providing my family with the inspiration we needed, for any hurts they have inflicted on me or my family, even in the distant past, I forgive them today.

Lord, I forgive all those who are of different **PERSUASIONS**, those of opposite political views who have attacked me, ridiculed me, discriminated against me; made fun of me, economically hurt me.

I forgive those of different religious **DENOMINATIONS** who have tried to convert me, harassed me, attacked me, argued with me, forced their views on me.

Those who have harmed me **ETHNICALLY**, have discriminated against me, mocked me, made jokes about my race or nationality, hurt my family physically, emotionally or economically, I do forgive them today.

Lord, I forgive all **PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE** who have hurt me in any way: doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, politicians and civil servants. I forgive all service people: policemen, firemen, bus drivers, hospital workers and especially repairmen who have taken advantage of me in their work.

Lord, I forgive my **EMPLOYER** for not paying me enough money, for not appreciating my work, for being unkind and unreasonable with me, for being angry and unfriendly, for not promoting me, and for not complimenting me on my work.

Lord, I forgive my **SCHOOLTEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS** of the past as well as the present. For those who punished me, humiliated me, insulted me, treated me unjustly, made fun of me, called me dumb or stupid, made me stay after school, I truly forgive them.

Lord, I forgive my **FRIENDS** who have let me down, lost contact with me, do not support me, were not available when I needed help, borrowed money and did not return it, gossiped about me.

Lord Jesus, I especially pray for the grace of forgiveness for that **ONE PERSON** in life who has **HURT ME THE MOST**. I ask to forgive anyone who I consider my greatest enemy, the one who is the hardest to forgive, the one I said I will never forgive.

Lord, I beg pardon of all these people for the hurt I have inflicted on them, especially my mother and father, and my marriage partner. I am especially sorry for the three greatest hurts I have inflicted on them.

Thank you, Jesus, that I am being freed of the evil of unforgiveness. Let your Holy Spirit fill me with light and let every dark area of my mind be enlightened. AMEN.



REMEMBER... • Forgiveness is an act of the will, not a feeling. If we pray for a person, we can be assured that we have forgiven that person. Forgiveness does not erase painful memories. However, inner healing prayer is available; contact Pastor Valerie Waller for referral. • To help accept an individual and open ourselves to a particular person more, visualize him with the Lord Jesus and say to the Lord, "I love him because You love him." • **FORGIVENESS IS A LIFE-LONG OBLIGATION.** • Daily we need to forgive those who hurt or injure us. However God does not call us to continue in abusive relationships. "Some things are intolerable in and of themselves no matter how many people put up with them. Intolerable things are forgivable. Forgiving an intolerable wrong does not make it tolerable. Forgiving an intolerable thing does not mean we intend to put up with it." Excerpted from "The Art of Forgiving" by Lewis Smedes • "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

Committing to a fast (From "Prayers That Avail Much" by Germaine Copeland)

Committing to a Fast

Introduction

Before committing to a fast, we encourage you to study the Word of God and to read books that provide important nutritional and other health information to gain more understanding about fasting. Understanding will help you avoid harm and injury – both physically and spiritually. Do not flaunt your fast, but do talk with your family and close associates if necessary. (*Personal Note: During times of fasting I continue to prepare meals at home for my family.*)

PRAYER

Father I consecrate this fast to you and set my mind to gain understanding in these matters for which I am concerned. (Write your concerns out and keep them before your eyes. Don't lose sight of the reason for your fast.) I humble myself before you, most high God. In accordance with Daniel 10:13, I will eat no _____ for the period of _____. I obey the word of Jesus by putting on festive clothing, so that no one will suspect that I am fasting. Father, you know every secret, and I look to you for my reward. I am assured that you hear me when I pray according to your will, and I know that I shall have the petitions that I desire of you. Father, I delight myself in you, and you cause my desires to be agreeable with your will. I choose the fast you have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke. I share my food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter. When I see the naked, I will clothe him, and I will not turn away from my own flesh and blood. Then my light will break forth like the dawn, and my healing will quickly appear; then my righteous will go before me, and your glory, Lord, will be my rear guard. Father thank you for cleansing my spirit, soul, and body. All my ways seem innocent to me, but my motives are weighed by you, my Lord and my Master. I commit this fast to you and my plans will succeed it is you who gives the wise answer of the tongue. Forever, O Lord, your word stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, like the earth you created; it endures by your decree, for everything serves your plans.

In Jesus' name!

Fasting Covenant

I commit with God’s help, to go on this spiritual “journey of Forgiveness and Confession “the next 31 days I will:

- Fast: I will fast from (or fast by not):

1. Study the daily scripture (Assigned in this journal)
2. Invest time in daily silent reflection
3. Pray daily (without ceasing especially when you feel hungry, use this to trigger a conversation with God throughout your day)
4. Daily Identify anyone, myself included that I need to pray forgiveness for.

Your Name

Accountability Partner

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
Phil. 4:13

2008

Family,

On behalf of the prayer ministry, we truly believe that God is calling the body of Christ, especially here at St. John's Downtown, to a greater level of intimacy. What does intimacy entail? How about quality time with someone who loves you and someone you love. This fast is an opportunity for us to make time for God. As John 15:5 says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and me in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Fasting allows us to get to really know GOD and to hear his heart in every area of our lives. **This fast also invites us to be cleansed; free from the bondage of UNFORGIVENESS.** Whether you plan your time with God early in the morning (say at breakfast) or midday, get away to a quiet place or even at night just do it! We suggest you pick a time you can consistently do routinely. There is great power in setting a specific daily time and meeting God there. We are believing that as you move through this fast you will not yearn nearly as much for physical food, but that you will "hunger and thirst," after the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Bon appetite!

Charlene

Charlene Slocum and the St. John's Prayer Team

PS. Please join us every Sunday in Room 211 for prayer at 8am, 10am, or 12noon. Corporate prayer is offered every Tuesday from 5:30am-7:30am in the Sanctuary. To learn more about prayer join us every first Thursday of the month at 6:30 - 7:30pm.
See You There!

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DEAR FAMILY,

Words of Caution!

Fasting is not for everyone and one should always consult with a physician knowledgeable about fasting before beginning. Expectant mothers, diabetics and others with a history of medical problems can enter the spirit of fasting while remaining on essential diets.

While fasting is helpful to many, the nature of God would not command us to do anything that would harm us physically or emotionally.

What is a Fast?

The dictionary definition of a fast is the practicing of abstaining from food, either completely or partially, for a specific period of time. Traditionally fasting has been widely used for the purpose of purifying the person or atoning from sin or wrong-doing. Prayer should always accompany fasting, which distinguishes it from mere "abstinence".

What are the four kinds of Fasts?

The **NORMAL FAST** - is going without food for a definite period during which you ingest only liquids (water and/or juice). The duration can be 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month or 40 days. Extreme care should be taken with fasts longer than one week and should only be attempted after medical advice from your physician.

The **PARTIAL FAST** - is one that omits certain foods or is on a schedule that includes limiting eating. It may consist of omitting one meal a day. Eating only fresh vegetables for several days is also a good partial fast.

The **ROTATIONAL FAST** - consists of eating or omitting certain families of foods for designated periods. Example: grains may be eaten only every fourth day. Various families of foods are rotated each so that one is available daily.

The **ABSOLUTE FAST** - allows no food or water at all and should be no longer than 24 hours. This fast can be harmful and even cause death. Only Moses survived a long fast such as this through the supernatural power of God. Be sure to test the spirit of anyone who tries to talk you into this type of fast (**We do not recommend this type of fast!**)

How do I fast?

First, we must prepare spiritually before fasting. A fast for spiritual purposes must be centered on God and can be so only if we ask God's help. We must recover both a reverence for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and a genuine respect for food as God's gift. Such inner preparation will give us a vision of the spiritual dimension of fasting, and arm us with the weapons we will need when temptations and difficulties arise.

Identify the type of fast that you will be undertaking, then, plan your fasting schedule, food restrictions and allowances.

Long fast need to be broken gradually. It is not recommended that you eat a big meal either before going on a fast or after a fast.

Lastly, a fast should be broken gently with a light, non-fatty meal, generally of fruits and vegetables.

What are the physical benefits of Fasting?

- Fasting provides the body with the opportunity for a 'physiological rest'.
- Fasting allows the speeding up of detoxification and healing processes.
- Fasting enhances immune function.

What are the precautions when I Fast?

First, this is not something to do for anything more than a short period (defined as 48 hours) unless you are under the supervision of a health professional who understands the physiology of fasting. Even short one and two-day fasts require guidance and this is provided below.

No one who has a serious health condition should fast unsupervised unless they have experience of the process. This includes anyone who is diabetic, hypoglycemic, pregnant or breastfeeding (not that fasting is contraindicated; only that it requires expert guidance under these circumstances).

No one who is currently taking prescription medication should fast unless under the supervision of an expert.

No one who has a history of eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia should fast unless under supervision.

Other forms of fasting can include abstaining from alcohol, sex, drugs, guns, cars, clothing, energy, gadgets, computers, videos, gossip, fads, ideologies, programs, work, leisure and even television. The purpose of abstaining from all of these things would be to learn rightly how to enjoy God's gifts. When what we possess possesses us, and what we consume is consuming us, the only way back to health and balance is to refrain from using those things that have control over us.

Healthy Fasting

Warning: Use Wisdom in Fasting

Before beginning any fast consult your physician if: **1)** you are pregnant; **2)** you are on prescribed medications; **3)** you are under a doctor's care; **4)** you have experienced illness on a previous fast. While fasting is healthful to many, the nature of God would not command a physical exercise that would harm people physically or emotionally.

Why Fast

Through fasting, Christians are empowered to discipline their daily relationships with the Lord. Fasting is cleansing, it cleans our bodies. Fasting means abstaining from food, turning away from the things the body craves in order for the inner man to concentrate on God in Worship, service and Praise. Fasting is a form of spiritual and scriptural sacrifice. Fasting does not change or impress God. Fasting changes us!

Other Fasting Options

1. Fasting from TV, secular/popular music, video games, surfing the web, chat rooms;
2. Fasting from all inappropriate reading material (pornography, "adult" videos, psychic hotlines, gambling);
3. Fast from worry, fast from gossip, watching what you say.

How should I determine what to fast from?

We're glad you asked! Take a moment right now and get quiet and still before God and ask Father, how/what would you have me to fast."

What if I slip and mess up during the fast?

Get up; confess your error, pray daily. Then, pick up where you stopped and keep going.

What are the Benefits?

1. Helps Christians become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
2. Allows you to spend more time waiting on the Lord.
3. Strengthens your prayer life.
4. Helps remove unbelief.
5. Destroys yokes of bondage.
6. Sharpens discernment and understanding.
7. Aids in clarity of spiritual hearing when guidance or a decision is needed from the Holy Spirit; Helps you to hear clearly from God.
8. Speeds up emotional, spiritual, financial and physical healing for you and others.
9. Places God as the focus of your life.
10. Allows you to fulfill the scriptures command to fast.

WHAT ARE WE PRAYING ABOUT DURING THE FAST?

Our fast this year is designed to focus our hearts and minds on Praying for the Power of Forgiveness and Confession as we seek to TOUCH lives as Jesus commanded.

YOU CAN FAST IN JESUS' NAME!

While fasting, keep your attitude positive and friendly. Matthew 6:16-18 tells us not to “advertise our fasting.” God who sees in secret will reward openly. Expect God to do AWESOME and wonderful things through you and the St. John’s Church Family in 2008.

May God bless you and keep you at all times and especially during this fast.

Levels of Fasting

This year we as a Church Family, we will fast from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm., January 2nd – February 2nd, 2008. (We invite you to fast for 31 days.

THERE WILL BE THREE CATEGORIES OF PERSONS WHO ARE FASTING:

“MENTORS” are those persons who have participated in the Church fast two (2) or more times. Mentors will eat one (1) meal per day. The meal must be eaten at or after 6:00pm. Please complete your meals within 75 minutes from the moment you put food into your mouth. Do not stretch meals! Please pray for prayer petitions during the time of the skipped meal (lunch meal).

“APPRENTICES” are those persons who have never fasted or have only participated in a Church fast one time. Apprentices will eat two (2) meals per day, one at breakfast and one at or after 6:00pm. Please complete your meals within 75 minutes from the moment you put food into your mouth. Please pray for prayer concerns and look for ways to give God Thanks, during the time of the skipped meal (lunch meal).

“TRAINERS” consist of persons who are under a doctor’s care, pregnant, or unable to miss a meal for health reasons. Trainers should eat regularly scheduled meals. Participation in the Church fast will consist of abstaining from foods such as sweets, carbonated beverages, breads, meats, or any food that you feel “you must have at least of little of” everyday. Please take time to pray before your daily meal.

REQUIREMENTS FOR FASTING

1. No nibbling! If you feel hungry (that's expected and normal), drink water, the lemonade included in this journal, and pray unceasingly.
2. MENTOR, APPRENTICE, or AUDIENCE should not eat sweets or desserts at any time during the fast.
3. Eat a piece of fruit, slice of bread, crackers, or vegetables (preferably raw) if you experience the following: headaches; fatigue or weakness; faint feelings; nausea; fever; and/or extreme hunger.
4. Please restrict your liquid intake to water. No sodas, juices, fruit juices, etc. You CAN drink, water, non-caffeine herbal tea, or use.
5. If you experience "light headedness" while exerting energy, please eat a light, nutritionally-balanced meal.
6. If you are eating once a day, it is recommended that you do not do strenuous exercise during the fast (limit exercise time to a reasonable length). Light exercise is recommended such as walking and riding a bike.
7. Be in prayer ALL day especially between 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Prayer is a state of mind and not a physical location!
8. If you "fall off" the fast just get back on! Do not allow the devil to condemn you. Ask your prayer partner for help and continue with your "commitment" to the fast.

SAMPLE - Daily Fast Schedule for January 2008

No Food from 6:00 am to 6:00pm

Prayer & Meditation: 5:30am, 12:00noon, 6:00pm, Bedtime

Food

Preparation

Breakfast Meal

Fruits /Organic Strawberries,
Blue berries, citrus,
Mango, cantaloupe, pineapple

Cut/sliced (fruit cups)
Smoothies (apple juice, ice, flaxseed)
or protein shake

Eggs (Natural Only)

Omelet, scrambled (with vegetables)

Evening Meal

Carbohydrate, Brown Rice,
Red skin potatoes
Protein Fish or chicken

Steamed or boiled

Baked or grilled in olive oil

Vegetables/Broccoli, spinach, zucchini,
Lentils, black beans, peas,
Carrots, celery

Steamed or sautéed less than 3 mins.

Raw

Salad greens/mixed greens, romaine
Lettuce, with tomatoes, walnuts

Vinaigrette dressings (cranberry, etc)

Dessert/Sorbet (frozen fruit)

Blend, freeze your own fruits with apple
Juice

Do's and Don'ts

Do: Reduce or eliminate all white sugar, white flour, processed foods (canned or packaged).

No fried foods, No fast foods, No margarines, limit butter, limit salt.

Season food with herbal seasonings (Mrs. Dash, Spike, Vegit, Low Sodium Tony Chachere's).

Spiritual

This fast is about:

- Focusing on Forgiveness and Confession to God for the power of touch in 2008
- Exercise of stewardship over our body (controlling "when" and "what" we eat).

FASTING RESOURCES

Elmer Towns' book, "Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough"

Betty Tapscott's book, "Inner Healing Through Healing of Memories"

Dennis Linn, Sheila Linn & Matt Linn's book: "Don't Forgive Too Soon: Extending the Two Hands that Heal"

Linda Schubert's book: "The Miracle Hour"

St. John's Prayer/Fasting Hotline 713-659-3237 ask for Pastor Valerie Waller

Call the Serenity Retreat to schedule an appointment for Inner Healing – 713-649-PRAY (7729)

St. John's website: www.stjohnsdowntown.org

THE HOLY SPIRIT: Your companion and comforter.

"Jesus said, "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

Ask Now...

God, I ask you now in the name of Jesus to fill me with the Holy Spirit. I step into the fullness and power that I desire in the name of Jesus. I confess that the Holy Spirit lives in me.

Scripture references: John 14:16-17, John 15:1-9, Luke 11:13, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:32,33,39, Romans 10:9,10

“Nine Fasts for Freedom”

Excerpt taken from Elmer Towns book, “Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough

THE DISCIPLE’S FAST

Fasting for freedom from addiction (see Matt. 17:20, 21). If we fast, we can break the besetting sins that limit a life of freedom in Christ.

THE EZRA FAST

Fasting to solve problems (see I Sam. 7:18). If we fast and pray for revival, God will pour himself on his people.

THE SAMUEL FAST

Fasting to solve problems (see Ezra 8:21-23.) If we fast for a specific purpose, we may solve a debilitating problem.

THE ELIJAH FAST

Fasting to break crippling fears and other mental problems (see I Kings 19:2-18.) Through fasting, God will show us how to overcome negative emotional and personal habits.

THE WIDOW’S FAST

Fasting to provide for the needy (see I Kings 17:12.) When we sacrifice our own physical needs, God enables us to focus on and provide for the needs of others.

THE SAINT PAUL FAST

Fasting for insight and effective decision-making (see Acts 9:9-19.) If we fast to subject our will to God’s will, he will reveal his will to us.

THE DANIEL FAST

Fasting for health and physical healing (see Dan. 1:12-20.) When we fast for physical well-being, God will touch our bodies and enrich our souls.

THE JOHN THE BAPTIST FAST

Fasting for an influential testimony (see Matt. 3:4, Luke 1:15.) If we fast for the influence of our testimonies, God will use us.

THE ESTHER FAST

Fasting for protection from the evil one (see Esther 4:16.) If we fast for protection and deliverance from Satan, God will deliver us from evil.

The practice of Lectio Divina

Use the daily scripture and place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent.

Step 1) Then, turn to the text and read it slowly. Gently savor each portion of the reading. Constantly listening for the “still small voice” of the word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.”

Steps 2) next take the word or phrase into yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas.

Step 3) then, speak to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images father, “what are you saying to me?” (With the word or phrase) experience God.

Step 4) finally, simply rest in God’s embrace.

Step 5) Return several times to the text, to savor the word or phrase.

thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Five

Scripture: Matt: 18:21-21, niv Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or, seventy times seven).”

Reading: Jesus says that we must forgive often. Jesus is concerned about the heart of the matter; will you be yielded enough to Christ to allow yourself to forgive as often as necessary? Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is an ongoing process. Jesus isn't teaching that we are to be entangled with abusive persons but rather that forgiveness is not really even about the person that has offended us as much as it is about our willingness to trust that Jesus' teachings really matter. Our response to that trust is to OBEY what he teaches us. “TRUST AND OBEY there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!” (Hymn)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: George blatantly lied on me during the team meeting. I met with George and his supervisor to confront the rumor. My difficulty is not dragging George into my tomorrow. I'm frustrated because he didn't apologize and denied everything. Overall I had a good day the George deal was just a moment out of the day.

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. Lord, thank you for showing me that the deal with George is not my whole life it was just a moment out of 24 hours. Thank you, this is going to help me to text the practice of forgiveness.

thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day One

Scripture : Ephesians 1:7-8,niv In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Reading: Eugene Peterson, *The Message Bible*, (NAV press 2002) this passage reads "Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people- free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly free!* He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making." God in his wisdom knew the destructive power of sin (anything that separates us from the fullness of the with-God life) and Jesus' teachings and ministry point us to the imperative, the great necessity of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the flip side of loving deeply. To be forgiven is the gift for those of us who love poorly. God has chosen us as the focus of his love and he is making us whole and holy by his love. We can reflect God's love in this world by being ready to say "Please forgive me, because I have also been forgiven." Forgiveness of our sins by God is a rich gift of His grace. Let's pass it on!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here, as an act of confession, you may need to forgive God, yourself and countless others)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (go to the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Two

Scripture: I John 1:8-10, nrsv (see **verses** 1- 10) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (ways that are not God's ways of being or doing). If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Reading: Studying the word of God and praying the forgiveness prayer on a daily basis will help us become increasingly sensitive to the presence of sin in our lives and far more sensitive to the love of God in our lives. Confession is saying that you agree with what God is pointing out to you. We don't confess to gain God's acceptance and love, but we confess to remove any barriers to our relationship with him. God has already accepted us and poured out his love for us (read John 3:16). The Confession of our sin is a spiritual discipline (practice, and privilege). Confession and forgiveness go hand in hand. Often we become so accustomed to our sins that we are blind to them. It is in the light of truth that brings the opportunity for us to confess and then to do the work of forgiveness. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our faults and shortcomings. We need not fear revealing our sins to God – he knows them anyway. Because God loves us so deeply he wants to forgive us! We can't erase what has happened but we don't have to (choose) allow the experience, abuse, memory, injustice, disappointment, disregard, or hurt to keep us bound to the person or event. Choosing not to forgive is like trying to kill the person who offended you but, *you drink the poison*. Choosing forgiveness is inviting God to forgive us of all the resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred etc. that we have held on to from our experience of being victimized, violated, or abandoned. When we confess we agree with God's plan, then He can begin the cleansing process and bring the healing and freedom we have long needed emotionally and spiritually.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Three

Scripture: Matt. 6:14-15, nrsv For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Reading: To fully understand our need to forgive we must have a better understanding of the measure of God's love for us. John 3:16 (par) That God so loved you, me and everybody else that he gave the best gift he had to give. What we are invited to do is to believe in him. And by our very belief we begin a life that can be free from the death caused by bitterness, hatred, resentment, ill-will and the desire for retaliation and all these imply. We gain everlasting life, the ability to know God and to recognize his love for us and we cultivate love for Him in all matters, forever. The commitment we make is to learn Jesus' way of being in the world. We are invited to desire, to intend, to decide to have a Jesus kind of life, a life that works. A life that has LOVE at its very core. If we are to fully appreciate God's love as expressed in the life and death of Jesus we must make it our intention, our focus to be students-apprentices of Jesus. We must study what Jesus said and what Jesus did so we fulfill the great commandment to love God and to love our neighbor as our self.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

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thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Four

Scripture: Mark 11:25, (niv), When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone; forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Reading: Jesus commands us to forgive others and points a direct connection between our willingness to forgive with the availability of God's forgiveness. It really boils down to do unto others as we would have God do unto us. We know that prayer is conversation with God perhaps Jesus is teaching us that we can avoid "mis" communication when we clear the channels of any unforgiveness.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Five

Scripture: Matt: 18:21-21, niv Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or, seventy times seven).”

Reading: Jesus says that we must forgive often. Jesus is concerned about the heart of the matter; will you be yielded enough to Christ to allow yourself to forgive as often as necessary? Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is an ongoing process. Jesus isn't teaching that we are to be entangled with abusive persons but rather that forgiveness is not really even about the person that has offended us as much as it is about our willingness to trust that Jesus' teachings really matter. Our response to that trust is to OBEY what he teaches us. “TRUST AND OBEY there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!” (Hymn)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

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thE FORgiveNESS IMPeraTIve

Day Six

Scripture: Luke 15:20-24, (v.11-32), niv “So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Reading: The father of the prodigal son never stopped waiting for his son to “come to himself”, to regain his senses, to come back to his rightful relationship with his father. The father was WAITING for his son to repent (to turn around right) and come home. What did the father forgive his son for? Remember forgiving is for people who have been both wounded and wronged by someone. The father is a picture of our Heavenly father who is always ready to receive us after we have blown it! He waits on us to desire to have a full and loving relationship with all its rights and privileges. Jesus shows us just how God treats us when we confess and repent. We really can come home to God again, forgiveness is the way.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

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the FORgiveNESS IMPeraTive

Day Seven

Scripture: Ephesians 4:31-32, niv Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Reading: Put away, in the Hebrew is “kartargeo” it is to intentionally remove or cast aside by power or force. Here we are being challenged to put away bitterness and anger; forgive as God forgives. “Ask yourself whether ‘I can’t forgive’ means ‘I won’t forgive.’ Then turn your heart toward the warmth of God’s love and allow that love to thaw your heart.” (David W. Schell, *Forgiveness Therapy*, Abbey Press, 1993)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

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OVerCOMING UNFORgivENESS

Day Eight

Scripture: Psalm 103: 12, niv As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Romans 8:1, niv There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Reading: How great is God's forgiveness to us! Who are we then to condemn ourselves if the only appointed judge has freed us from any condemnation – disapproval, punishment and guilt. We are free because Jesus “took the rap” for us. “Self forgiveness cleanses the soul, washing away shame and guilt. Out of self-forgiveness comes the power to extend forgiveness to others.” Say it now....”I forgive myself for.... And keep saying it until you believe it!!!!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

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OVeRcOMING UNFORgivENESS

Day Nine

Scripture : Luke 11:24-26,niv Jesus said, “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.”

Reading: Confess with your mouth that “**If** I possess unforgiveness in my heart towards others, regardless of their wrong doings against me, I open my heart to permit seven other spirits more wicked than unforgiveness to enter in.” Here are seven other spirits which are akin to unforgiveness but are even more wicked; Resentment * Ill-will* A grudge* Malice*Retaliation* Bitterness* and Hatred*. (Don Cossett, *What you say is what you get!*, Whitaker House, 1976) I choose forgiveness rather than this!!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

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OVerCOMING UNFORgivENESS

Day Ten

Scripture: Romans 8: 9-11, niv You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Reading: Once we have identified and confessed that we have been held by unforgiveness, pray the forgiveness prayer then repent, “Lord forgive me for holding on to this Resentment, anger, etc.” Realize that as believers in Christ Jesus we have an invisible means of support. We have power that often goes largely untapped. We have the same power available to us that raised Jesus from the grave and empowered him to live again after his death. That power is the promise that Jesus made to his disciples the promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon them. The Holy Spirit is the life giving power that enables us to live lives that are invaded in every area by the full life of Jesus. Power to be his witnesses. The power to keep “letting go”. The power to live a life that works well. The power to love fully. A life that is Spirit powered, Spirit controlled.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

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OVerCOMING UNFORgivENESS

Day Eleven

Scripture: Mathew 26:42, niv He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done”.

Reading: The stamp of the saint, follower, disciple, apprentice to Jesus is that s/he can waive their own rights and “obey” the Lord Jesus. We like Jesus can learn to surrender our will to the perfect will of our Heavenly father. This is not easy but it is the way of love. The power to surrender comes from prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit in full operation in our lives. We begin to trust him and see that we can take him at his word. Pray today (just say Lord Jesus, I can not obey God or fully come to trust him without supernatural power. I surrender my will and ask to be filled with the life giving power of the Holy Spirit today.) Now believe that you have received the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us the ability to surrender to the will and ways of God that produce a life with God as our sustainer. The free-er we are of unforgiveness the greater our capacity to allow God’s love to flow through us, the greater our ability to surrender to his perfect will.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

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OVERCOMING UNFORGIVENESS

Day Twelve

Scripture: Gen. 45., Gen.45:4-5, niv Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.”

Gen. 50:20,niv “ You intended to harm me, but God intended for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Reading: If **Joseph** had waited on an apology from his brothers for the wrong they did to him he could have destroyed the plan of God for saving the lives of the entire nation of Israel. He could have allowed bitterness and a desire for revenge (which is not sweet) to destroy his relationship with God. Our expectations of others can set the stage for premeditated resentment. Remember the “seven other spirits”, resentment is the first of the worse. Someone might say “I would forgive others if they would only ask me to forgive them.” Forgive even when the offender has made no attempts to extend his/her apology for your perceived wrong. It is never between you and them anyway. Unforgiveness in your heart is always a matter that can only truly be settled between you and God. If you are waiting for an apology you are possibly taking the risk of condemning yourself to a life sentence of unresolved bitterness; you risk allowing your life to be shaped not by the Spirit of God but rather by the actions of someone else. You decide your will or God’s will be done.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

OVERCOMING UNFORGIVENESS

Day Thirteen

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-22, niv Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or, seventy times seven).”

Reading: How often should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, no! Seventy times, the question that was asked was focused on the offensive person but Jesus’ response was directed to the wellbeing of the offended person. Jesus was saying in essence you must forgive as often as necessary...period. It’s not really about you and them it’s always about you and GOD. What is coming up for you, about the experience with the other person that is in need of healing? Perhaps you are feeling frustration, shame, victimization, resentment use the feeling list (in the appendix) to put a name on your feelings. What you feel God can heal. Forgiveness is God’s gift of healing for our hurts.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

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OVerCOMING UNFORgivENESS

Day Fourteen

Scripture: I John 2:10 – 12, nrsv Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his (Jesus Christ) name.

Reading: Jesus' teachings consistently point to the need to forgive others not only so that our heavenly father will forgive us but, the darkness that comes from unforgiveness is like wearing blinders and it can trip us up. Cultivating forgiveness is like keeping the pipeline of our heart clear so that plaque doesn't build up and weaken or damage the heart. Love flows more readily from God to us when there is no unnecessary blockage like unforgiveness. The truth of God's word removes the blinders from our eyes and flushes out the plaque that would harden our hearts toward others and ultimately toward God.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Fifteen

Scripture: I Peter 1: 4b-9niv ...you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith- the salvation of your souls.

Reading: As believers we have power available to us through Christ and that power is keeping power. Power to get us through the “various trials” and the power to keep loving and, and giving God the credit that we still can do so!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

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THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Sixteen

Scripture: Luke 3:1-5,niv But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers **of** money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Reading: Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving; When You Need to Forgive and don't Know How*, (Moorings, 1996) p.159 **“Forgiving is not an obligation.** Forgiving is an opportunity to do something good for ourselves after somebody has done something bad to us.” **Forgiving is not about letting people get away with something.** Forgiving a person does not mean that we tolerate what that person is doing to hurt us. **Forgiving is not about staying with people who are hurting us. ...”** three fundamental points...because when people ask how often they should forgive, what they usually want to know is how much abuse they need to put up with. They are not really asking about forgiving. They are asking about tolerating. And they need to understand that forgiving and tolerating are different species, as different as cantaloupes and basketballs.”
We must set limits on abuse, but there can not be a limit to forgiveness.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Seventeen

Scripture: Ephesians 4:26-27, niv “In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Reading: Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving; When You Need to Forgive and don't Know How*, (Moorings, 1996) p.167 “Stay Angry. Sometimes people wonder how they could have forgiven someone when they are still angry at what s/he did. My response is: If you feel angry about what happened to you, congratulate yourself. Your anger is a clear sign that you are in touch with reality. The enemy of forgiving is hate, not anger. Anger is aimed at what persons do. Hate is aimed at persons. Anger keeps bad things from happening again to you. Hate wants bad things to happen to him. Anger is the positive power that pushes us toward justice. Hate, by that token, is the negative force that pushes us toward vengeance. So if you get angry when you remember what s/he did to you, it does not mean that you have not forgiven him. It only means that you get mad when people do bad things to you.” Give yourself permission to feel what you feel and then talk with someone a trusted friend, counselor, prayer partner, pastor to begin the process of healing the anger so that it doesn't become a permanent state of being. That is the idea behind not allowing anger to dwell in us forever. Anger is not a sin, but it must be addressed. Anything on fire too long can burn and boil over. Seek counsel.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Eighteen

Scripture: Psalms 24, (from Prayers before an Awesome God by David Haas)
“Who is this God of ours? God is the one who paves the way for all that is right and good, who keeps things clear when everything seems confused and blurred. Who is this one who rules? -It is God: Strong, Loving, Just, Wise, Holy

Reading: DENIAL – In their book “Don’t *Forgive too Soon: Extending the two Hands that Heal*” Dennis, Sheila, and Matthew Linn, (Paulist Press, 1997) address the five stage forgiveness process. Denial is like anesthesia from the pain caused by a hurt or an offense. Denial covers up the truth. It blurs, and confuses us. Denial is avoiding the real feelings that get stirred up when we have been violated or “trespassed against”. The feelings are what need to be and can be healed. It is during the process of healing that God’s truth revealed to us in prayer paves the way for wholeness.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

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THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Nineteen

Scripture: Psalms 42:1-3, 5, niv As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God? Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God.

Reading: Anger – The Linn's (*Don't Forgive too Soon*) make these points regarding anger. "The gift of anger is that it locates our wound, helps us defend ourselves and energizes us to correct what needs correction." "Lingering anger usually indicates we moved too quickly through the forgiveness process." "We believe that in an abusive situation we have no right to forgive until we have honored our anger. Anger at abuse and injustice is an expression of our integrity and our dignity as human beings. We must honor our anger before we forgive because authentic forgiveness comes from the same place of integrity deep within us." "St. Thomas Aquinas said that virtue consists in being angry at the right person for the right reason and for the right amount of time." If you feel overwhelmed by anger (or any other feelings) get professional help.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Twenty

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-17, niv “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Reading: Bargaining - The Linn’s (*Don’t Forgive too Soon*) suggest, that in the bargaining stage of forgiveness we ask “for changes we want to see in the other person before we will be willing to move further through the forgiveness process. (“I’ll forgive you if...”) An easy way to discover our bargains is to write out the ideal apology letter we would want to receive from that person. Bargains help me discover my ideal fantasy of what I still need before I can forgive. Bargains are healthy because they give voice to our anger by pinpointing not only what we are still upset about but also what we need in order to start the healing process. Even if the person who hurt us cannot or will not respond as we wish, our bargains reveal how we need healing and we can open ourselves to receive this healing in other *healthy* ways.”

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention? *Consider writing out the apology that you have needed from the person who has hurt you the most.*

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS

Day Twenty-one

Scripture: Psalm 32, niv (please read the entire passage) Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord". And you forgave the guilt of sin...

Reading: Depression - The Linn's (*Don't Forgive too Soon*) write, here "instead of blaming the other person as in the anger stage, we blame ourselves. The danger in this stage is that instead of healthy guilt (I made a mistake) we feel false guilt, in which we blame ourselves for mistakes that are not our fault. The extreme is toxic shame. (I am a mistake and I don't deserve to be treated any better)." Shame makes us feel unworthy of the very thing we most need: love and forgiveness. The key to health in the depression stage is to honestly admit our mistakes and at the same time take in love and forgiveness. The depression stage gets healed to the extent we can receive love as we take responsibility for our mistakes...and do not take responsibility for the mistakes of others. If the depression stage seems to be looming overhead like a dark cloud by all means consider seeking a counselor, physician or trusted friend who can listen to your feelings and offer sound support and or referral to a mental health professional. To hear my story of depression go to www.stjohnsdowntown.org. There is help, there is hope!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Two

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11-14, niv“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,” plans to prosper you and *not to harm you*, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord,” and will bring you back from captivity.

Reading: Acceptance - The Linn’s (*Don’t Forgive too Soon*) report “as we let God and others help us forgive ourselves and make amends for our mistakes, we move out of the depression stage and enter the final stage of acceptance. In acceptance we are grateful for the new life that has come from the hurt. We are not grateful for the destruction we have experienced, but now this seems less than the new growth in giving and receiving life with God, others, the universe and ourselves.” If we have not gone through the stages in a healthy way prior to now we may still need to review those stages and start the work we need to complete them. Before we will be able to totally forgive, we will need to let God and others help us forgive ourselves more deeply in the places where we got stuck. To the extent that we offer ourselves the unconditional forgiveness God is always offering us, we can offer that same unconditional forgiveness to others. We may need to forgive ourselves for making peace at any price, for thinking we deserve disrespectful treatment or for not being at home with our anger (or other emotions). We tend to get stuck in our own way according to how we carry our unresolved hurts from earlier life. Ask yourself “when have I felt this way before? Then go through the five stages to heal these earlier hurts.”

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Three

Scripture : Deuteronomy 29:29, niv The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. James 1:17,niv Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jeremiah 31:3, niv ...”I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving- kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel.

Reading: You don't have to figure everything out - The Linn's (*Don't Forgive too Soon*) Suggests, "...you may be thinking that the five stages of forgiveness sound very complicated. If you are in touch with a hurt, perhaps you don't know how to figure out what stage you are in or how to move from one stage to another. Actually the stages are not about figuring anything out. Rather, they are about letting yourself be loved wherever you are, with all your thoughts and feelings regarding the hurtful situation. When you do that, you will automatically move from one stage to the next." The Linn's offer this tip imagine yourself in the presence of someone who loves you, such as God or your best friend. Get in touch with a hurt that doesn't bother you as much as it used to. In the presence of that person, ask yourself if you can find any gifts that have come out of the hurt. Although you need not be grateful for the hurt and destruction itself, is there any way you are grateful for the new life coming from this hurt? Especially, consider how the hurt has helped you belong to yourself, others, God and the universe." For example, perhaps you were spanked or beaten as a child and your experience motivated you to find nonviolent ways to raise your own children and relate to others. Or, perhaps you were not listened to and as a result you have developed the skill of listening compassionately."

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Four

Scripture: John 8:31-32, niv “Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

Reading: “There are no formulas- no definitive how-tos- for growth in the inner character of Jesus. Such growth is a way of relentless seeking. But there are many things we can do to place ourselves at the disposal of God, and “if with all our hearts we truly seek him, we shall surely find him” (Jeremiah 29:13, par). (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, NAV press, 2002)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Five

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:11-13.niv *When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall fully know, even as I am fully known. And now these remain: faith' hope' and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Reading: There is freedom in maturity. New understanding can be gained and new ways of being with God and with people can emerge. New possibilities are a by product of the freedom to love. "There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; No disease that enough love will not heal; No door that enough love will not open; No gulf that enough love will not bridge; No wall that enough love will not throw down; No sin that enough love will not redeem... It makes no difference how deeply seeded may be the trouble; How hopeless the outlook; How muddled the tangle: How great the mistake. A sufficient realization of love will dissolve it all... If only you could love enough you would be the happiest and most powerful being in the world.

Emmet Fox (from *The Language of Recovery: and living life one day at a time*, Blue Mountain Arts collection)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Six

Scripture: Luke 4:18, niv “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Reading: - Michael Yaconelli, *Messy Spirituality- God’s*

Annoying Love for Imperfect People (Zondervan, 2002) p39

“No punishment anyone might inflict on [us] could possibly be worse than the punishment [we] inflict on [ourselves] by conspiring in [our] own diminishment.” “We diminish ourselves when we hold on to unforgiveness which literally drains us, decreases our power to love and be loved, curtails our joy and often causes us to grow gradually less than we are designed to be.” We have been imprisoned by the effects of unforgiveness but in Christ we are free to give and receive the abundant love of God in every area of our lives. This is the year we can see God’s favor flowing freely through us!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Seven

Scripture: Galatians 5: 1, niv It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Reading: *D. Willard, Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, Colo., 2002) p.11 unforgiveness is a hindrance in our being able to put off the old person and to put on the new one. God by his Spirit gives us the power to move through the valleys of unforgiveness into a wholesome and rewarding life. A life of freedom, no one must be stuck in a life of “spiritual and personal defeat. A life of victory over sin and circumstance is accessible to ALL.” We are not free to do whatever we want but free to do what had seemed impossible. We have been given the ability to abide in the love of God shown us by Christ Jesus. We have been given through the power of the Holy Spirit the ability to LOVE.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Eight

Scripture: Galatians 5:13, niv Live by the Spirit You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Reading: David Rensberger, *God is Love* (Weavings- A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life, p18) says “The human life, and especially the human death, of Jesus made God known as love. That is the reasoning of 1John, andelsewhere in the New Testament, love is not just a feeling, a warm affection for another person, but the way in which that feeling is expressed in will and in action. Love is a regard for the other’s well-being so strong that it will set its own interests aside for the sake of that well-being, [except when to do so could cause harm] “a self- determination to do good, good only, and always the highest good possible.” This is love, and God is this love, and it is in Jesus that this God is made known to us. So, this all means that you and I are made free to show off God’s love to those in our world. We are free to do the right thing to love and to serve. Jesus’ very life was lived and died to the fulfillment of the call to serve. Who will you serve this day? How will you be a servant today?

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Twenty-Nine

Scripture: 1 John 4: 15- 21, niv If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Reading: The love that God has for us is so powerful that it can move us and heal us beyond our hurts, bruises, abuses and failed relationships. His perfect love can drive out the fear of being hurt again and free us to love anew. Freedom in love does not mean setting ourselves up to be abused again but can help us to set healthy boundaries that make loving less risky. Loving does not mean agreeing with poor behavior or inappropriate choices. Freedom in love gives us the ability to stay open to the flow of God's love through us.

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today's prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Thirty

Scripture: John 3:16, niv 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 17:3, niv “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Reading: Dr. Cecelia William Bryant, *Kiamsha, Spiritual Disciplines for African Women*, “Today I walk as (one) forgiven and I extend forgiveness to all with whom I come in contact. Today, by the power of the love of God, I am reconciled to all whom I have offended and those who have offended me. Praise the Lord.”

“The issue, then, is filling our own hearts with the incomparable love of God. That’s the only way we can truly love other people. Then we can love them with no strings attached, without demanding certain responses to make us feel better about ourselves.”

Rudy Rasmus from his book “Touch” *Pressing against the Wounds of a broken World*, (Thomas Nelson publishers, 2008)

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

THE FREEDOM TO LOVE

Day Thirty-One

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:1-13, niv And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Reading: Rudy Rasmus , from his book” TOUCH” writes of his Auntie Mae Mae, “Auntie Mae Mae had felt pain in her life, but instead of lashing out in bitterness or wallowing in self-pity, she dug deeper into the heart of God and found a fountain of unconditional grace, kindness and affection.” Auntie Mae Mae had come to know the freedom to love. God makes this freedom available to all those who ask, seek, and knock. This kind of freedom is obtained through moment by moment abiding in God’s word, and keeping the ear of our heart open to him. We all have the power to choose the most excellent way. Here’s to your freedom to love!

Prayer: Turn to the forgiveness prayer and pray it now.

Morning Reflection: Take a moment and be quiet before God, How is He speaking to you, stirring your heart after today’s prayer? Who do you need to forgive? (list them here)

What about the scripture and/or reading that has gotten your attention?

Evening Examen: Take a moment and be quiet before God. What difficulties or frustrations have you encountered today? What joys and delights?

After you have remembered your day turn the not –so- good & the good into a prayer of thanksgiving. (see the SAMPLE page to see how this can be done)

Forgiveness - Postlude

Dallas Willard in his book *Renovation of the Heart*, (NAV press, 2002) Says "The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we allow or require our minds to dwell upon. We are not totally free in this respect. But we do have great freedom here, and even though 'dead in trespasses and sins,' we still have the ability and responsibility to try to retain God in our knowledge- if only in an inadequate and halting manner.

As you have moved thru this intentional time of prayer and fasting you may have found your emotions being "stirred up". Perhaps memories that had been forgotten, gentle reminders of sin in our lives, shame, fear, guilt, anger, distress this is where we are given the opportunity to recognize, often reluctantly, the reality or truth of God's word active in our lives. Nothing can separate us from God's love! When the stuff (feelings, memories thoughts that you know are "throwed off") start being stirred in your heart then acknowledge them and confess them to God. There are times when there is the need to be prayed with or for, feel free to call Pastor Valerie Waller (713-659-3237) and she can direct you. Our sins don't keep God from loving us; they keep us from wrapping our arms around him!

We love you and there's nothing you can do about it!!

Pastors Juanita and Rudy Rasmus

For more comfort read Romans 8:28-38. You are more than a conqueror!
YOU ARE FREE TO BE A LOVER!

