



PRAYER, FASTING, AND CONSECRATION | 2022

Abide

The Power and Beauty
of God's Word



EVERY NATION
JOHANNESBURG

21 Days of Prayer, Fasting and Consecration

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#ENfast2022

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Preparation for the Fast

Why Fast?

Fasting is a spiritual tool God uses to advance his kingdom, change the destiny of nations, spark revival, and bring victory in people's lives. Every Nation churches and campus ministries begin each new year with five days of prayer and fasting to humble ourselves before God, consecrate ourselves to him for the upcoming year, and corporately agree for breakthroughs.

Jesus fasted.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:1–2

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. **Luke 4:14**

Jesus knew he was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill his purposes. Fasting makes us spiritually strong and prepares us to do God's work.

Fasting is an act of humility and consecration.

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. **Ezra 8:21**

As we humble ourselves through prayer and fasting, we receive God's answers to our prayers.

Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **Acts 13:2**

When we deny ourselves of natural cravings and worldly distractions, we become more sensitive to God's voice. Then we are better able to focus on God and submit to his will.

Fasting brings revival.

And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. **Isaiah 58:12**

Throughout history, God has brought revival and delivered nations from destruction in response to prayer and fasting. Fasting helps us prevail in prayer and intercession.

Fasting is healthy.

Fasting cleanses your digestive system from toxins. Doctors consider fasting a cure for certain allergies and diseases. The discipline of fasting helps break unhealthy addictions in our lives.

Planning Your Fast

Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." **Joshua 3:5**

Pray—Spend time reading the Bible before the fast. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayers. On pages 7–9, write down your faith goals and specific prayer requests for your family, friends, church, and nation.

Commit—Pray about the kind of fast you will undertake and commit to it ahead of time. Record your plan on page 5. Ask God for grace to help you follow through with your decisions.

Act—Start eating smaller portions a few days before the fast. Avoid food high in sugar and fat. Plan to limit physical and social activities for the week of the fast. Ask someone to be your prayer partner throughout the fast and have that person sign page 5.

NOTE: Consult a physician, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking medication. If your situation does not allow you to do a full fast, determine what will work best for you.

While Fasting

[Jesus] answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" **Matthew 4:4**

Focus—Set aside time to work through the devotionals. Be ready to respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Pray—Join at least one prayer meeting in your local church. Intercede for your family, church, pastors, nation, campuses, and missions throughout the week.

Replenish—During mealtime, read the Bible and pray. Drink plenty of water and rest as much as you can. Be ready for temporary bouts of physical weakness and mental annoyances like impatience and irritability.

Breaking the Fast

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. **1 John 5:14-15**

Eat—Reintroduce solid food gradually. Your body will need time to adjust to a normal diet. Start with fruits, juices, and salad, then add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.

Pray—Don't stop praying! Trust God's faithfulness and timing. Carry your newfound passion for God throughout the year. Be in faith for God to answer your prayers.

My Plan

DAY 1

☐ Water only ☐ Liquid only ☐ One meal only ☐ Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 2

☐ Water only ☐ Liquid only ☐ One meal only ☐ Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 3

☐ Water only ☐ Liquid only ☐ One meal only ☐ Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 4

☐ Water only ☐ Liquid only ☐ One meal only ☐ Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 5

☐ Water only ☐ Liquid only ☐ One meal only ☐ Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. **Matthew 18:19**

My Prayer Partner:

I am thankful to God for . . .

Answered Prayers

List highlights, answered prayers, and lessons learned in 2021.

In 2022, I will seek God and trust him in these areas:

Personal Faith Goals

Spiritual Revival • Physical Healing • Prosperity and Abundance • Rich Generosity . . .

My Family

Restoration of Relationships • Household Salvation . . .

My Education/Career

Excellence • Promotion . . .

My Ministry

Small Group Growth • Salvation of Colleagues and Classmates . . .

I am committing to pray for . . .

Name

Request(s)

I am committing to pray for . . .

My Church

Church Leadership • Provision • Discipleship Ministry . . .

My Community

Campuses and Educational Institutions • Local Government •
Outreach Opportunities . . .

My Nation

Government Officials • Spiritual Revival • Economic Prosperity • Peace
and Order . . .





Every Nation currently has work in **81** nations.

Fulfilling a generational vision.

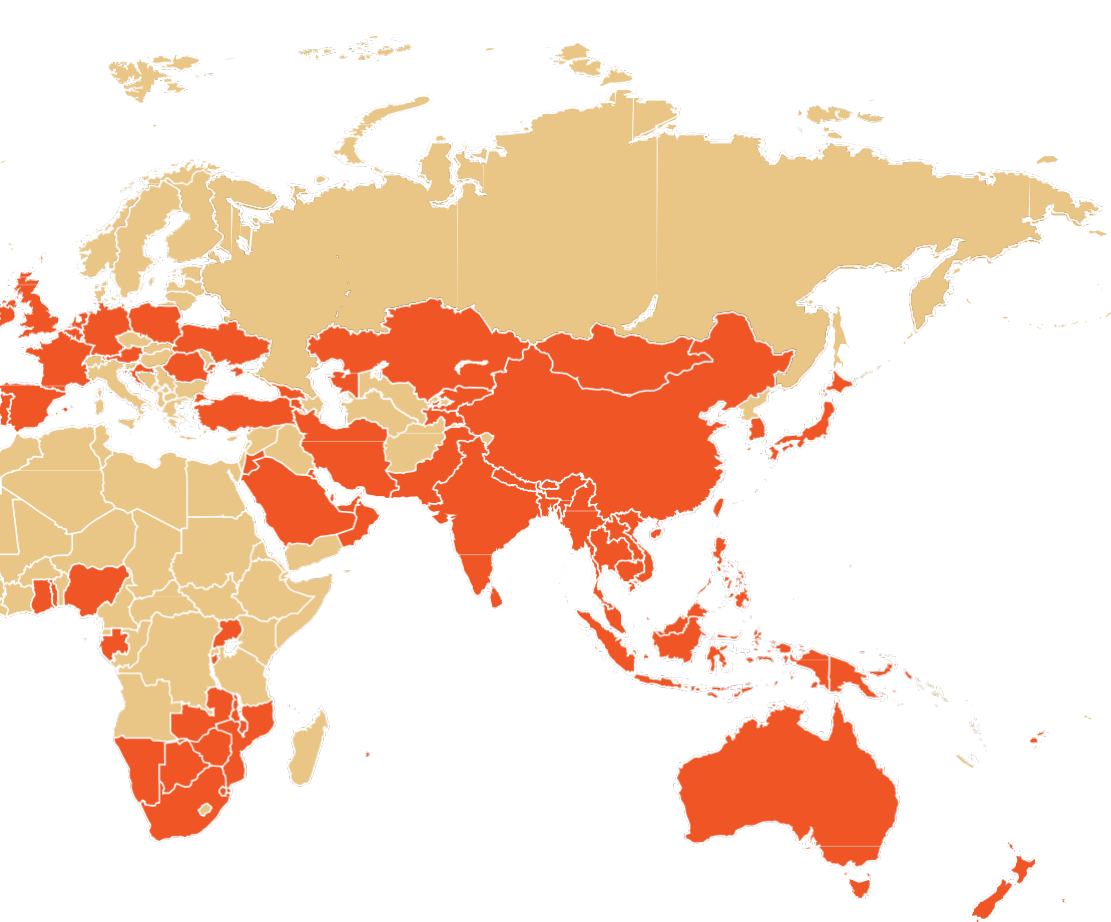
God has called us to reach every nation in our generation—he's given us a mission and a timeframe.

We must pray for the nations, prioritize the campus, and recognize the preeminence of the gospel.

Continue to pray for the remaining **114** nations and believe God for open doors to plant more churches.

-  Nations with Every Nation Churches
-  Unreached Nations

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Afghanistan | Central African Republic |
| Albania | Chad |
| Algeria | Comoros |
| Andorra | Congo |
| Angola | Costa Rica |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Côte d'Ivoire |
| Argentina | Cuba |
| Azerbaijan | Cyprus |
| Bahamas | Czech Republic |
| Barbados | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| Belarus | Denmark |
| Belize | Djibouti |
| Benin | Dominica |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Ecuador |
| Bulgaria | Egypt |
| Burkina Faso | El Salvador |
| Cabo Verde | Equatorial Guinea |
| Cameroon | |



Eritrea
Estonia
Ethiopia
Finland
Gambia
Greece
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Haiti
Hungary
Iceland
Iraq
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Kenya
Kiribati

Latvia
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Libya
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Madagascar
Mali
Malta
Marshall Islands
Mauritania
Micronesia
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Morocco
Nauru

Niger
North Korea
Norway
Palau
Palestine
Paraguay
Russia
Rwanda
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and
the Grenadines
Samoa
San Marino
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Serbia
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Slovakia

Slovenia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Suriname
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Tanzania
Tonga
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
Tuvalu
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Vatican City
Yemen

458 established churches globally

88 active church plants*

Pray for more churches to be planted.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. **Psalm 2:8**

Pray for our new church plants as they make disciples, meet the needs of their communities, and share the good news of the gospel in new cities.

Nations with active church plants:

Armenia	Indonesia	Nigeria
Australia	Iran	Panama
Botswana	Kazakhstan	Portugal
Brazil	Laos	Romania
Cambodia	Malawi	South Africa
Canada	Maldives	Tajikistan
China	Mexico	Timor-Leste
Croatia	Mongolia	United Arab Emirates
France	Mozambique	United States
Gabon	Nepal	Vietnam
Georgia	Netherlands	Zambia
Honduras	New Zealand	Zimbabwe
India	Nicaragua	

**Numbers as of May 2021*

1,905 established campuses and outreaches*

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. **Matthew 9:38**

A vision to reach the whole world through the university campus.

We plant churches that reach the campus because we firmly believe that if we change the campus, we will eventually change the family, the nation, and the world. Campus ministry is a dedication to take the gospel to college students, right where they are on campus. It's a calling to serve, to impact, to go.

Pray:

- For new students to be engaged with the gospel this year
- For wisdom for campus missionaries and churches as they evangelize and disciple college students
- For favor with university faculty to engage students
- For open doors at new campuses

**Numbers as of May 2021*



The Word Is Like BREAD

Read Deuteronomy 8:1–20

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. **Deuteronomy 8:3**

Additional Reading: Matthew 4:3–4, Luke 4:1–4, John 4:34

Bread was central to the diet of the ancient Near East. Even today, many cultures have a bread that is unique and prevalent to their diets. There is the crunchy baguette in France, the unleavened roti in India, the spongy injera in Ethiopia, the thin tortilla in Mexico, and the soft pandesal in the Philippines.

But in Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses declares that man doesn't live by bread alone. While the Israelites were in the wilderness, God provided for them by raining down manna, a bread-like food, from heaven. Now, as they prepare to enter the Promised Land, a land of plenty, Moses takes time to remind the people who fed them in the wilderness. And even though they will no longer need bread to rain down from heaven in the new place they are going, their dependence on God remains the same. It is in trusting and obeying God's Word that they will live and thrive in the land. They need his Word like they need bread to survive.

In the same way, our dependence on God's Word should be like our reliance on bread. Each day of this fast, our bodies will crave more and more the nourishment that bread provides. But it is this craving, this almost all-consuming awareness of our need for food, that this metaphor of God's Word as bread becomes all the more relevant to us. Just as our bodies crave bread, we should crave God's Word, living in constant awareness of our need for him and his words every day.

In fact, we learn in John's gospel that Jesus himself is the very Word of God. He calls himself the "bread of life," promising that whoever comes to him will never hunger or thirst. When we come before him and fill ourselves with God's Word, we can receive his salvation and be truly fulfilled.

God's Word is true. God's Word is powerful. And it is through God's Word that he reveals himself to us, and we are transformed and empowered to live for him.

As we go into a week of prayer and fasting and our hunger for bread grows day by day, may our appetite for God's Word grow even more.

Think of a situation when you had to depend on God.

Give him thanks for sustaining you through it.

**What verse or passage has kept you encouraged this past year?
Take time to praise God for his Word being trustworthy and
powerful in your life.**

God's Word SUSTAINS US.

Deuteronomy 8:3

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

God, thank you for the gift of the Bible. Through your Word, you speak to me and remind me that you are for me. You show your everlasting character, and I learn to hear your voice as I read and meditate on scripture. Lord, help me build a daily desire to abide in your Word, a desire that would grow throughout my walk with you. Your Word nourishes my spirit and fulfills my heart. As I pray, fast, and consecrate myself to you this week, may my understanding and love for you grow as I draw nearer to you. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a SEED

Read 1 Peter 1:13–25

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God ... **1 Peter 1:23**

Additional Reading: Mark 4:3–9, 13–20

In this verse, Peter tells us that it is through the imperishable seed of the Word of God that we have been born again. What does he mean by this? In God's Word, we find the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ to save us. And it is through the good news found in God's Word that one is born again. But God doesn't just uncover his plan of salvation through his Word. He reveals his very self to us. That's why Peter calls it the living and abiding Word.

Peter compares the Word of God to an imperishable seed. What's interesting about a seed is that it's dry and dull with little evidence of life before you plant it. But once it's in the proper condition, planted in damp and nutrient-rich soil, life bursts forth from it as we eagerly wait above the surface for those signs of life to appear. Just like a seed needs to be planted in the proper condition for life to spring forth, God's Word is waiting to be planted in the good soil of a believing heart. And then, by the Holy Spirit, his Word will germinate, take root, and grow, bringing life and beauty to whatever it touches.

When we open up the living and abiding Word of God, we encounter the God of the universe, the one who created all things and is making all things new. And when we meet him, our lives can't help but be transformed. There may be areas of your life that have felt dry. Maybe your love for the lost has waned, or your passion for God's mission has been quenched. God's living and abiding Word will never lose its power to touch every dull, dry, and dead area of your life, causing it to burst forth with new life that is lasting and eternal. And as his Word touches and transforms our lives, we can't help but sow this imperishable seed, sharing the good news of what Jesus has done to save us, wherever we go.

Think about when you first heard the gospel. Did someone share it with you? Reflect on that moment, thanking God for his salvation.

Since the Word is living and abiding, what are some areas of your life it can renew this week?

God's Word *MAKES ALL THINGS NEW.*

1 Peter 1:23

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God ...

God, I believe that your Word is an imperishable seed that can renew every area of my life. I can bring my brokenness, confusion, and insecurities before you, knowing that you make me whole, confident, and secure through the seed of your Word. You have brought me from death to life and are faithful to finish the good work you began in me. Lord, I pray that you will continue to change my life to reflect your love to others around me. Because of your Word that you've planted in me, I can be bold to share your Gospel wherever I go.

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a LIGHT

Read Psalm 119:105–112

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Additional Reading: Psalm 119:130

Psalm 119 is a wisdom psalm that expounds on God's Word as the perfect guide for life. In verse 105, the psalmist says that God's Word is a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. In the ancient Near East, a lamp was a small bowl with a pinched lip on the side where the wick would sit. Filling the bowl with oil, you would light the wick, providing enough light to illuminate a dark path.

As we go through life, we're frequently faced with situations beyond our ability to navigate: decisions we have to make, challenging circumstances we face, ideas and ideologies we have to wrestle with. We try to figure things out on our own, but without a guide, we stumble in the darkness. We need a trustworthy light to illuminate the dark path in front of us.

In God's Word, we find such a guide. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul tells us that all Scripture is God's breathed-out Word, meaning the words found in the Bible are

from God. Do you have someone in your life who is so reliable that when they tell you something, you trust their words without question? You can trust them because their character has proven to you over time that they are trustworthy. And if we can trust a person's words, how much more can we trust the words of our perfect God, who has proven time and again that he is good? God's Word is a trustworthy and reliable guide because God is a trustworthy and reliable guide.

You may currently face a situation beyond your ability to navigate—a decision you have to make or a challenging circumstance you have to respond to. God's Word is a bright light to guide your dark path and provide you with the wisdom you need. And not only will God's Word give you wisdom, but in obeying God's Word, you will grow as a person of wisdom who can shine his light in a dark world.

Think of a time when God's Word has given you wisdom during a difficult circumstance. Spend time in thanksgiving for his guidance.

Praise God that he is trustworthy and reliable. Are there areas in your life where you can better trust God's Word for guidance?

God's Word *GUIDES US.*

Psalm 119:105

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.*

Heavenly Father, you have given me your perfect Word as a guide through this imperfect world. Because you are good, trustworthy, omniscient, and kind, I can lean into your guidance in every situation I face.

You care about my life and the decisions I have to make. Your Word has the power to bring order to chaos and is light in the darkness. I have no reason to fear. As I hide your Word deep in my heart, teach me how to read and apply it to my life.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a MIRROR

Read James 1:19–25

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. **James 1:23–24**

Additional Reading: Romans 2:13

James is writing to Christian Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire who are experiencing trials and who, during these trials, are following the worldly practices of those around them instead of putting God's Word into practice. And so, throughout his letter, James makes the point that it's not enough to hear God's Word. We have to do what it says.

Here, James compares someone who hears the Word and doesn't do what it says to a person who examines himself in a mirror but then walks away and forgets what he looks like. The analogy almost seems ludicrous. How can you look closely at yourself to see how you really look and then walk away and forget? But that's the point that James is trying to make. Do you examine yourself in the mirror in the morning, checking to make sure your hair isn't sticking up straight, or you don't have anything in your teeth? In this process, if you noticed a giant smudge on your face, would you walk away and forget about it? Just as it would be foolish to walk

away and do nothing about a smudge on your face—to forget what you look like—it is foolish after examining God’s Word to walk away and not obey it.

Like a mirror, God’s Word shows us what we’re really like. Without his Word, it’s easy to deceive ourselves into thinking we’re something we’re not, to ignore our weaknesses, and make excuses for our sin, especially when we’re in the midst of challenging circumstances like James’ audience. But this isn’t possible when we hold up God’s Word to our life. When we examine our lives by the truth of God’s Word, we see what we’re really like, and we’re met with God’s grace and mercy to repent and be transformed.

We need to investigate God’s Word so that it can show us who we really are, but we can’t stop there. We then need to walk away and put God’s Word into practice.

How have you seen God’s grace and mercy at work in your life?

Are there areas where you have been hesitant to put God’s Word into practice? Take a moment to praise him for his love and mercy toward you.

God’s Word REVEALS WHO WE ARE.

James 1:23–24

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

As I read your Word, O Lord, I trust that you will show me what I am like and what you are making me to be. Search my heart and reveal where and how I need to put your Word into practice in my life. Grant me the humility to do what your Word says as a faith response to your free gift of salvation. Holy Spirit, thank you for your power that helps me obey, changes my heart, and directs my steps.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a HAMMER

Read Jeremiah 23:23–32

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? **Jeremiah 23:29**

Additional Reading: Acts 2:37–38

The prophet Jeremiah lived during tumultuous times for the nation of Judah. He started his career as a prophet during the reign of King Josiah, the last faithful king, and he continued to prophesy during the final years before Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the people were brought as captives into Babylon.

Throughout Jeremiah's ministry, he proclaimed the bitter message that judgment was coming, calling the people to turn from their evil and idolatrous ways and to turn back to the pure worship of the one true God. But the people didn't listen to Jeremiah. Instead, they chose to listen to false prophets, men who spoke attractive messages that reflected what the people wanted to hear rather than declaring the word of the Lord.

Contrary to these futile and hollow words spoken by the prophets, God's Word is a hammer, capable of breaking the hardest rock to pieces. When you see the word

“hammer,” you may think of a carpenter’s hammer that’s used in most projects around the house to drive nails into an object. But in this context, it’s better to think of a blacksmith’s hammer used to forge and shape metal and, when wielded with great force, can crush and shatter an object.

As we walk with Jesus, it’s possible for our hearts to become hardened. This can happen through a secret sin that goes unconfessed, bitterness that comes from unforgiveness, or the cynicism that creeps into our hearts when a prayer goes unanswered. During these times, we may find ourselves endlessly scrolling on social media, reading negative news online, and binge-watching television more than abiding in God’s Word.

But when we open up the Word of God, we experience the weight of his hammer, able to crush and shatter the sin, bitterness, and cynicism of a hardened heart as we respond in humility and repentance.

How have you experienced God’s Word softening your heart? Thank him for his power to change your heart.

Are there particular moments or hardships that have caused you to follow “false prophets” rather than turning to God’s Word?

God’s Word *SOFTENS OUR HEART.*

Jeremiah 23:29

*Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and
like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*

God, you know my heart better than anyone,
and you have loved me even when I have
drifted from your ways. Show me how I have
drifted and place me back on solid ground. I
repent for when I have placed my trust in the
things of this world instead of in your Word.
Your Word has the power to turn a heart of
stone into a heart of flesh. I open myself up
for you to mold my life. God, as you soften
my heart, empower me to bring your Word to
those around me. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a SWORD

Read Hebrews 4:1–12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12**

Additional Reading: Ephesians 6:13–17

Leading up to Hebrews 4:12, the author speaks about a Sabbath rest that God has for us. While this Sabbath rest was offered to the Israelites, their disobedience and unbelief kept them from entering it. Now, this Sabbath rest is provided to those in Christ, but the author of Hebrews warns us not to take it for granted like the Israelites did so that we won't fall by the same sort of disobedience.

The author of Hebrews then talks about the power of the Word of God, comparing it to a double-edged sword. With swords, there are different types of blades, each designed for a different purpose. Some are meant for force, while others are meant for accuracy. A double-edged sword, sharpened on both sides, is uniquely designed to pierce its mark with precision.

As we learned from James, the Word of God shows us what we're really like, and as we learned from Jeremiah, God's Word has the power to crush our sin-hardened

hearts. Now here in Hebrews, we find that the Word of God is a double-edged sword, able to pierce to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow. Essentially, this means that it can penetrate to the very core and essence of who we are. But the author also says that the Word of God is living and active, meaning that it doesn't just pierce our heart, showing us who we are and convicting us of our sin, but it has the power to transform us from the inside out.

As we live out our salvation in Jesus, we don't want to fall by the same disobedience and unbelief that the Israelites did in the wilderness. But as we read the living and active Word, this double-edged sword will pierce us, showing us what's really in our hearts and transforming us more and more into Christ's image as we respond in repentance and faith.

Faith and repentance are gifts from God that draw us closer to him. Have you thanked him for these gifts?

What areas in your life are you in faith to see the Word transform?

God's Word TRANSFORMS US.

Hebrews 4:12

*For the word of God is living and active,
sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to
the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and
of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.*

O Lord, thank you for your living and active Word that transforms me from the inside out. I choose to abide in it even as it cuts through the hard places of my heart. Lord, I repent of when I have conformed to the world's standards. I pray that you would transform and renew my mind as I meditate on your Word daily. Increase my faith and make me more like Christ as I read it.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like HONEY

Read Psalm 19:9-10

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. **Psalm 19:9-10**

Additional Reading: Psalm 119:103, Proverbs 16:24, Proverbs 4:22

This morning, I took a sip of my ginger and lemon infusion and very quickly added a little fresh honey. Oh, how it transformed the experience! Now I can taste the sweetness and enjoy how it soothes my throat and tantalises my taste buds. I am not surprised that God asks us to see His word the same way.

Honey is sweeter than even sugar and has been used since ancient times as both a sweetener and as a medicine, according to an article published in Medical News Today¹. Honey is used to reduce coughs and relieve symptoms of bronchitis, helps relieve allergies and heals wounds, skin problems and even helps to reduce hair-loss. Honey is easy to digest and delicious to taste.

However, in comparison to honey, God's Word is even sweeter. God uses honey to give us an understanding of the power, grace and delight we can find in His Word. Like honey, God's Word is healing and life-giving. Like honey, even just a little bit of God's Word completely transforms the way we experience life.

¹ Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317728>

Think about how the Word of God has sweetened the way you've experienced a past situation in your life. How did God help you through His Word?

Since the Word of God is sweet, gracious, healing and life-giving, going forward, what Scriptures can you add to your current experiences that will transform your life for the better?

God's Word *MAKES LIFE SWEET.*

Psalm 19:9-10

*The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the
rules of the Lord are true, and righteous
altogether. More to be desired are they than gold,
even much gold; sweeter also than honey and
drippings of the honeycomb.*

O Lord, God, your Word is sweeter than honey. It brings healing to my soul and gives life-giving power to how I live. I bring my experiences, both good and bad, and ask that you sweeten my life through your Word. Lord, show me Scriptures that will help me heal and give me the empowering grace to transform my experience of life. I ask that I may actively drink of your sweetness. I choose to obey and live out your Word.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like FIRE

Read Jeremiah 23:29

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord. **Jeremiah 23:29**

Additional Reading: Psalm 51

If you have ever watched a season of the reality show Survivor, where contestants are stranded on a desert island, you know that their existence is miserable and highly challenging until they are able to create fire. You see them desperately rubbing sticks together to create the fire they need to purify their water and cook their fish.

I will never forget the moment where the character played by Tom Hanks in the movie Castaway finally manages to create fire and is beside himself with joy as he dances around the bonfire. Fire is fascinating. Think of your reaction when two metal objects are struck together and sparks fly, or how awestruck you would be to witness a lightning bolt strike a tree so that it spontaneously bursts into flames.

But fire can also be dangerous – it has the ability to burn up anything that gets in its way. We saw when runaway fires gutted UCT's Upper Campus in April 2021 and when wildfires spread across Australia last year consuming vast areas of forest.

In both Testaments, God is referred to as a "consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29). One of His core attributes is holiness, which refers to the absolute purity of His Being. Anything that comes into contact with God is consumed. No wonder the Israelites were afraid and kept their distance when God appeared to speak to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:18-19).

When God's Word goes out of His mouth, the result is life changing for whoever hears it. As you spend time in the Word of God, you will be purified as it transforms worldly passions raging in your heart, confronts false beliefs lurking in your mind and exposes secret sins buried in your soul. We simply cannot remain unchanged when we hear, read or meditate on the Word of God. It is like a fire, purifying everything in its path!

How have you experienced the Word of God as a purifying fire in your life?

What can you do in the next week to allow the Word to purify how you think, what you feel and what you do?

God's Word *PURIFIES US.*

Jeremiah 23:29

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord.

Dear Father, thank you for the gift of your Word that is able to purify me in every area of my life. Help me as I make a fresh commitment to live in your Word. Give me a renewed hunger and thirst to hang on to every Word that comes out of your mouth. Where I have resisted your Word in the past, I ask for your forgiveness and invite you to use your Word to purify my heart, soul and mind. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like MILK

Read 1 Peter 2:2

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation. **1 Peter 2:2**

Additional Reading: Ephesians 1:17-19, Ephesians 3:16-19

Have you ever stopped to ponder the miracle life-giving force that is milk? Research has shown that healthy human breastmilk contains millions of live cells, 1000 proteins, 200 complex sugars, 40 enzymes, growth factors, hormones, vitamins and minerals, antibodies, long-chain fatty acids and microRNAs. All of these elements of milk are combined in such perfect proportions that this liquid is able to sustain the life of a helpless newborn infant.

Why is it that Peter compares the Word of God to milk? Because in much the same way that breastmilk nourishes and sustains an infant, so too does the Word of God sustain the lives of those who will drink of it. Not only does Peter draw a parallel between milk and the Word, but he beseeches Christians to crave it. We have to be told what to crave because the right appetite doesn't always come to us naturally.

Just like newborn infants, we will sometimes reject the milk we need, until we get a taste of it. The reality is that this "pure spiritual milk", the nutrient that meets our deepest needs, is not always something that we long for. If we are to develop an appetite for the Word, we need to start ingesting it.

Why does Peter further refer to the spiritual milk as pure? Pure simply means undiluted or uncontaminated. If an infant's milk were to be contaminated by a toxic substance or alcohol, the nutritional benefits of the milk would be thrown out of balance. These toxins lead to a drowsy, weak infant that fails to thrive. Christians who allow the Word they ingest to be contaminated by worldly influences will similarly experience malnourishment and fail to thrive. They become drowsy, weak Christians that suffer from stunted growth.

Do you want to be a Christian that develops a healthy appetite for the Word of God, but you don't know how? The solution is simple: start drinking the pure spiritual milk, knowing that the insatiable appetite will follow. Spend time learning the Word so that:

- God might grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17)
- The eyes of your heart will be flooded with light (Ephesians 1:18)
- You might know the greatness of His power in you (Ephesians 1:19)
- You will be strengthened in your inner being (Ephesians 3:16)
- You may be rooted deep in love and your life founded securely on love (Ephesians 3:17)
- You might grasp the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love (Ephesians 3:18)
- You might become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself (Ephesians 3:19)

Will you allow the Word of God to nourish you?

How is your spiritual hunger for God's Word?

What are the harmful toxins that you are allowing to dilute the Word of God in your life that you need to deal with?

God's Word *NOURISHES US.*

1 Peter 2:2

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure
spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into
salvation.*

Father God, your Word promises that you know what I need before I even ask it. Thank you that you know that your Word is the perfectly balanced nutrient that I need to grow in my Christian walk with you. Forgive me for the times that I have rejected this perfect form of nourishment or have allowed it to become tainted by the influences of the world. As I commit to spending time in Your word, please will you grow in me an appetite that cannot be satisfied anywhere other than in the pure milk that is your Word. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a SHIELD

Read Ephesians 6:16

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. **Ephesians 6:16**

Additional Reading: Hebrews 11:1, Proverbs 30:5

One of South Africa's greatest ever military tacticians was a young general called Shaka. He was the Zulu king and under his leadership the Zulu Impi warriors reached world renown. He transformed battle by making his warriors nimble and fast. They would get up close and personal (hand-to-hand combat) and were deadly with their long blade—short shaft assegais. But their battle strategy would have been incomplete without a redesigned shield – smaller and lighter with hooks attached to them, which they used to wrench the enemies' shields from their grasp, exposing their left flanks.

A shield is a defensive item. However, the same holds true for military equipment as for footballers, where the world's best attacking players tend to overshadow the world's best defenders. Defensive items never take the same place of prominence as their more attractive attacking counterparts like swords, spears and assegais. But what no military tactician can deny is that a pre-requisite to any successful military campaign is the ability to first and foremost defend and protect oneself in the heat of battle. Only once the defensive measures are in place can a successful attack be launched.

This lack of defensive preparation may be the reason why so many in the body of Christ are operating as wounded soldiers. Though filled with desire and zeal to advance God's Kingdom, they often find themselves unprepared, isolated and exposed.

Paul instructs us in Ephesians that we need to take up the Shield of Faith to extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy. He also reminds us in Romans 17 that faith comes by hearing (and applying) the Word of God.

As we immerse ourselves in God's Word, we are building our faith and putting the defensive barriers in place. We safely prepare ourselves for battle after battle after battle, until the campaign is complete.

In which ways has the enemy broken through defensive barriers and wounded you? List the three that are the most challenging in your life at this moment.

Run a Google search to find the promises in God's Word that deal with each of the three key issues you have identified above. Write down two or three promises for each and meditate on them every day until the breakthrough comes.

God's Word PROTECTS US.

Ephesians 6:16

*In all circumstances take up the shield of faith,
with which you can extinguish all the flaming
darts of the evil one.*

Father, I thank you that your Word is
powerful to protect us. I thank you that as I
meditate on your Word you build my faith.
Father I bring _____
(confess the wound) to you today. I quote
the promise in your Word that

(quote the Scripture). We know that in you
all things are possible and we stand on
these promises, believing that what you
have started you will take to completion.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *SOAP*

Read John 15:3

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

John 15:3

Additional Reading: Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22, James 1:25

There is nothing quite as potent as the combination of soap and water when it comes to washing away dirt and grime, or the sweat and weariness of a busy day of work. In John 15:3, Jesus tells His disciples that the word he has spoken to them has made them clean.

There was nothing magical about the words Jesus spoke to these twelve men, and there is nothing magical about the Bible we read today. What enabled the word Jesus spoke to cleanse His disciples then, and us today, is the fact that His words are full of spirit and life (John 6:63), the very truth of God.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the living and active Word of God discerns our very thoughts and intentions. We might be able to fool ourselves, we might be able to believe that all our motives and intentions are pure, but the second we submit them to the bright and holy light of God's Word, we can immediately see where they contain selfishness and sinful desires. The Word of God helps us realise what we are really thinking and feeling and guides us back to God's truth.

James tells us that if we only hear the Word, simply do our daily reading, tick a box and get back to our lives, we are actually deceiving ourselves (James 1:22). He wants us to be “doers of the word” – people who don’t just pay attention to what the Bible says, but actually figure out how to apply it to our thinking, our feelings and ultimately to our daily actions.

God’s Word will reflect back to us how obedient or disobedient we are to God’s truth. It makes us aware of where we need to focus the soap and water of His truth.

James goes on to explain that the Word of God reveals to us the “law of liberty” (James 1:25). As we act on what we read in God’s Word, we will be blessed with freedom. Understanding without application keeps us passive and static. Hearing the Word of God and acting on it brings liberty and freedom to our minds, souls and hearts, just like soap and water frees us from dirt.

When last did your reading of Scripture make you aware of some dirt and grime you needed to wash away?

What are practical ways you can put what you read into practise, and let the word be like soap to your soul?

God’s Word *WASHES US CLEAN.*

John 15:3

*Already you are clean because of the word that I
have spoken to you.*

Father, thank you for giving us your divine
revelation through the Bible. Thank you for
speaking words full of the Spirit and full of
life and truth. As I read your Word, Holy
Spirit, convict me of sin and
unrighteousness. Make me aware of how
you think and feel about me and my life.
Show me what your expectations are of me.
Show me what you think of me and feel
towards me. Help me to live out the truths
that you reveal to me from your Word so
that I may be an obedient doer of your
Word and not just a hearer of your Word.
In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *MEDICINE*

Read Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. **Proverbs 4:20-22**

Additional Reading: Exodus 15:26, Matthew 8:2,3,14-17, Galatians 3:5,6

Nobody likes being sick, and to get better we often look for some medicine to help us get better. Medicine that remains in its container is of no value to us. We can read the label and hear recommendations from others who have benefited from taking the medicine, but unless we personally follow the instructions it won't impact our lives. The Word of God is like medicine, teeming with precious live-giving promises, even for our physical, emotional and mental healing.

What does the Bible teach us about healing? Firstly, the Word of God reveals the nature and character of God to us. In the Old Testament, we see God revealing Himself to us as the "Lord who heals" (see Exodus 15:26). This is who God is. In the New Testament, we see that God's nature has not changed. In Matthew 8:2, Jesus was asked a question by a man afflicted with leprosy: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." His question was not theological but personal. Effectively, he was asking Jesus not if He could heal but rather if He wanted to. Jesus' response reveals God's heart to heal – "of course I'm willing" – Jesus stretched out His hand and healed the man. God's Word continually draws our attention to the fact that God wants to heal us.

In Matthew 8:16,17, we see a huge crowd of people coming to Jesus for healing and He heals them all. The Bible says that this was a foreshadowing of what happened on the Cross when Jesus died to save and set us free. Jesus not only wants you well, but He takes our sickness and pain upon Himself so that we can be healed. Jesus takes our place.

Our ability to receive healing is not a question of our worthiness, but rather of what Jesus did for us on the Cross! The Word of God tells us what we must do to be healed. The Bible teaches us that all we need to do is believe what the Bible says with simple childlike faith (see Galatians 3:5,6). Let's believe the promises of God for us. Below is a prayer for healing. Once you have prayed, try and do what you could not do before, check to see what God has done. If need be, pray again until all pain is gone.

List the names of anyone that you know who might need healing. Pray for their healing and if possible, lay hands on them for healing. Make a record of what happened.

Ask God to give you a boldness to pray for the sick. Whom will you pray for in person? When will you pray for them?

God's Word *HEALS US.*

Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh..

Father God, I thank you that you love me
and that you want to heal me. I thank you
that Jesus died on the Cross for my
salvation and for my healing. Thank you
that you heal me as a gift of grace. In the
name of Jesus, I command
_____ (name of sickness
or symptoms) to leave my body. In Jesus'
name, I receive my healing. Thank you
Father God. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *RAIN*

Read Isaiah 55:10-11

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. **Isaiah 55:10-11**

Additional Reading: Deuteronomy 32:1-3, Isaiah 45:8, Exodus 16:4

I think we can all agree that rain is a blessing! Rain waters the earth so that it can in turn produce all that is necessary for our daily survival and sustenance. The water that the rains give us is vital to our subsistence, for without water there can simply be no life.

The analogy between rain and God's Word in this verse is therefore a powerful one and offers great spiritual insight into the tremendous value and workings of His Word in and through our lives as Christ followers.

His Word, like rain, has a refreshing activity in our lives. It refreshes our wearied souls. The challenges of daily life drain us of strength and wear us out. But His Word, His truth and precious promises are like welcomed showers of rain in the heat of the day, they revitalise our wearied souls. When we stop to spend time in His Word, we find a much-needed respite from the unrelenting pressures that surround our daily lives.

His Word, like rain, has a production activity. It generates brand-new life in and through our lives. Just as rainfall waters the earth causing new life to sprout so that we can enjoy the food and sustenance it yields so too His word produces sustaining life within us. His Word at work in our lives, yields all we need to walk out His purposes for our lives. This is good news indeed!

Notice the two distinct directions this verse mentions. First, this new life is generated within us to give away to others – to sow as seeds of life. We are called to share and spread the life-giving, life-transforming Word of God with those around us. Secondly, like bread, the life of His Word feeds and nourishes our own lives. His word sustains us.

His Word is as essential to our lives as rain is to life on earth. This is a profound spiritual truth and by it we understand that His Word is to be held as a priority in our daily lives. As disciples, our relationship with His Word is primary – something we are called to rely on for our daily sustenance and provision.

The analogy of the Word of God being like rain is a powerful one. Think about how quickly life would die away on earth if it never rained. Has the rain of God's Word been waning in your life? What are some of the dry areas in your life that need the life-giving and life-producing rain of God's Word today?

Take a moment to pray and ask God for a Scripture for each one of those areas you identified above. Then write them down and commit to abiding in the truth of those verses. Please use the Notes page for this.

God's Word IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR LIVES.

Isaiah 55:10-11

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Lord, thank you for reminding me today that your Word is as essential to my life as rain is to life on earth. Help me therefore to prioritise your Word in my daily life. Forgive me for where I have neglected your Word, for where I have allowed the busyness of life to erode my daily discipline of abiding in your life-generating Word. I stand in awe of your promise that your Word will fulfil, achieve and realise your full purpose in and through my life. Let it be so Lord. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *SILVER*

Read Psalm 12:8

The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. **Psalm 12:8**

Additional Reading: Isaiah 55

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines trust as, “an assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something”. It expands that by saying that “to trust is to find one in which confidence can be placed”. Psalm 12 is a great text for us to reflect on as it describes how words spoken have broken our trust and how the Word of God is the appropriate place to direct our trust.

Because of how much words mean to me, and I am sure to many of us, I couldn't help but be impacted by the different categories of words that can't be trusted that David highlights in this Psalm. He does this as a way of showing how fallen the world has become and how double-hearted everyone is. His appraisal sounds like it's from the impression that personal experiences have left on him. You might be asking yourself what all of this has to do with the Word of God, but it's because of this gloomy background that we are able to see how reliable and how immutable God's word is.

The sixth verse in this psalm introduces the purity of God's Word against a compromised, broken world filled with empty promises, flattering lips, boasting of the tongue, lying, injustice, etc. This is the picture of hopelessness that was not only faced in David's day but is prevalent in our day as well.

Imagine the restoration of hope that happened in David's heart when he considered how vastly opposite God's Word is. He even puts numerical value to how God's Word is continually purified - as if there was any room for it to be any purer. He likens it to silver, which continually gets refined to ensure perfection. After reading about silver, what stood out for me is how silver is termed as a definer of electrical conductivity. Apparently, all other metals are compared to it when it comes to this trait. So, we can conclude that one can truly rely on the character, ability, strength or truth of this metal when it comes to conducting power. God longs for us to experience His Word in this manner - that it conducts and carries his character, ability, strength and truth without interference and compromise.

What an incredible picture of finding the One in which our confidence can be placed. The opening line of the Psalm is a loud cry for God to save. We see that the purity and power of God's Word was the most fitting response. This is not only seen in this Scripture, but also in the life of Jesus who was the very Word of God - pure and full of undeniable power. May we redirect our trust to Him and place our confidence in His Word as the definer of faithfulness.

How do you think the picture of hopelessness in the text – flattering lips, boasting of the tongue, lying, injustice – have affected your trust in God's Word? How can you take practical steps to prove and re-establish that trust?

We are called to be like Christ in all things. How will you be intentional about shining the light and power of God's Word to those around you?

God's Word RESTORES HOPE.

Psalm 12:8

*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver
refined in a furnace on the ground, purified
seven times*

Lord, I thank you that rain comes down
from heaven and do not return to it
without watering the earth and making it
flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower
and bread for the eater. May your Word
that goes out from your mouth not return
to you empty but accomplish what you
desire, and achieve the purpose for which
you have sent it. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *WATER*

Read John 4:14

But whoever drinks of the water that I will give Him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. **John 4:14**

Additional Reading: John 4:1-42, John 7:38-39, Revelation 22:17

When it is a super-hot Jozi summer's day, I think two of the most refreshing things are a drink of ice-cold water and a swim – not just a “toes-in-the-water” kind of swim, but a “jump-or-dive-in-fully-submerged” kind. It's amazing to think how much water can refresh and revitalise us, giving us life. I think this is what we should find to be true of the Word of God as well – it is a place of total refreshing and rejuvenation.

Jesus Himself, in John 4:14, refers to this kind of life-giving refreshing. The encounter with the woman at the well is a favourite of mine. On possibly her most depressed, challenging, physically exhausting and thirsty day, Jesus Himself meets her needs. In fact, He meets more than what she needs. She found herself not just getting a physical drink, but being totally refreshed, accepted, loved, freed, valued and more filled with purpose than ever before. We go on to read how she went and told everyone about this encounter with the living Word and His thirst quenching, life-giving ability. It transformed her completely.

When we set aside time to allow the Holy Spirit to refresh us, to speak directly to our needs, to not just meet them but exceed them, it gives us life. It quenches our thirst for other things because we are getting all we need from Jesus. As humans, we were made to thrive when we drink at least 2.5 litres of water a day and we can't survive for longer than 3 days without water. As people of God, made in His image, we need to be submerged in Him, drinking His living water often and letting it flow from our innermost beings to those around us.

What does that look like? I think it looks like purposeful, uninterrupted time in His Word and in His presence – listening, receiving, reading, worshipping, being still – all of these things. And when we let Him overflow to others, it can quench their thirst and ours too.

Are there things or people you “run to” other than Holy Spirit, Jesus or Father to meet the thirst you feel in your soul? Why not spend some time giving these other things over to God?

Jesus Himself, the living water, encountered the woman at the well and quenched her thirst. Where do you need Jesus to encounter you today?

God’s Word QUENCHES OUR THIRST.

John 4:14

*But whoever drinks of the water that I will give
Him will never be thirsty again. The water that I
will give him will become in him a spring of water
welling up to eternal life.*

Lord Jesus, I want to get all that I need from you and you alone. Today I give you anything that causes me to have my thirst quenched in other places (list these things). I ask that you would come now, meet me as you did the woman at the well. Holy Spirit, thank you, that you refresh my soul, that you quench my thirst, that you meet me right where I am. Thank you that you fill me to overflowing. Every place in my soul and body that needs an encounter with you, Lord Jesus, I surrender those to you. Thank you for your life-giving water, that as you fill me, I can refresh others as I go today.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is *LIFE*

Read Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. **Proverbs 4:20-22**

Additional Reading: John 6:63-68, John 5:24-26, Philippians 2:16

This passage in Proverbs 4 is affectionately addressed to a son, so as you read through this passage today, open your ears and your heart to your Father as He speaks.

The first thing He says is be attentive to His words. Now when we give someone our attention, it's a sign that what they are saying is important to us. Therefore, if our Father's words are important to us, then we shouldn't just rush through His word, while scrolling through Facebook or running through emails or allowing our minds to be flooded with distractions. No, let's pay attention to what God has to say to us.

Secondly, to do this, we have to incline our ears to his Word. It's like being in a crowd while many people are speaking, but we fix our ears to the most important person in the room. Your Father is the most important person in the room, turn your ears to what He is saying.

Thirdly, He says we must not let His Word escape from our sight, but keep it stored in our hearts. So, once we hear a word from God, we should walk through our day with awareness of that word. It's kind of like our cell phones. We walk through our day, always aware of our cell phones in our pockets. We reach for them, we scroll through them and we know exactly where they are. If someone calls at any time, we are always ready to respond. In a similar way, let's stay aware of God's Word throughout our day, and if that call from heaven comes, let's incline our ears again, so that we can receive another Word from our heavenly Father

Finally, he tells us why we are to do this: it is because His word will bring life to those who find them and healing to their bodies. God's Word is life giving. God has designed things so that we have to put in some effort to find His Word, but if we dig for His Word like a treasure, we will find life and healing in His Word.

If God's Word has to be found, how can you put more effort into seeking and finding His Word this year?

How can you keep His word continuously in your heart this year?

God's Word BRINGS LIFE.

Proverbs 4:20-22

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

Father God, please help me to be more attentive to your Word this year and help me to prioritise time in your Word. Open my ears to the voice of your Spirit and help me store your truth in my heart. Let your Word bring healing to my body and healing to every broken place in my soul. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is a *BLESSING*

Read Ezekiel 34:26-27

And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing.

Ezekiel 34:26

Additional Reading: Genesis 12:2

Some years ago, the Western Cape was in the midst of a severe drought. It was so serious that there was a very real possibility of reaching DAY ZERO, when the water would actually run out. There had been minimal rain for years and the dams were empty. Everyone – from the farmers to those living in the suburbs – were struggling. Strict water restrictions were in place and people were allowed to only use a maximum of 50 liters a day. You were not allowed to run a bath but had to shower standing in a big tub so that you could reuse the shower water to flush the toilets.

My daughter was living in a residence at the University of Stellenbosch at the time. There was a central quad between the rooms where the students would gather for special events or to hang out. One evening, my daughter messaged us with the news that it had started to rain. Following months without a drop of rain, this was exciting news. She then sent us a video of what was happening in that quad: students from every age, race, political spectrum and background were dancing and singing in the rain in the middle of the quad. Underlying their excitement, was the hope of this one rain shower bringing more rain that would eventually break the drought.

I am not sure what drought you are facing right now? This past season has been an extremely difficult one for many, with countless stressors relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on our lives. But, in the midst of this drought, we have seen God's provision in so many ways.

Ezekiel 34:26-27 says: "And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them." Here, God promised to bless the children that He loved, to bring them under His blessing and make them a source of blessing.

God is the source of all blessings and His Word is a blessing beyond compare. His Word, like those showers of rain, is meant to wash over us. It brings life and has the power to break, heal, restore and to build. His very words created the world and brought life.

The students had to step out of their rooms, out of their place of comfort, to experience the blessing of the rain. They had to step outside and allow the rain to fall on their faces. We need to do the same with God's Word. We need to step out of our place of comfort and our fears that was caused by the drought in our lives, and step into the rain. God promises His showers of blessing. Will you dance in the rain?

In what area of your life do you need to step out of either your comfort or your fears and into God's blessing?

**What promise of God do you need to hold onto right now?
Memorise this promise and speak its blessing over your life.**

God's Word RESTORES AND BUILDS.

Ezekiel 34:26-27

And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

I thank you Lord God for your Word.

Thank you Lord that your Word is a blessing to me and that your heart of love towards me is to bless me. Lord, thank you for the promises of your Word. Wash over me with your Word and heal, restore and build in me what you would like to. Lord use me to, in turn, be a blessing to my family, my church and to my community.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is *FLAWLESS*

Read Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Proverbs 30:5

Additional Reading: Psalm 12:6, Psalm 119:140, Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Have you ever had a friend who makes promises but doesn't keep them? Maybe this friend would say all the right things, but in the end, you have come to realise that he or she cannot be relied on. As we grow up, we become all the wiser and we start taking people's promises with a pinch of salt. Without even realising it, this often creeps into our relationship with God. We might not even know it, but we might be taking His Word with a pinch of salt. We might not be sure that we can truly believe what it says, let alone rely on it with our lives.

Everything in life is flawed, but in Proverbs 30:5, the writer exclaims, "Every word of God is flawless" (NIV) or "proven true" (ESV). Psalm 12:6 says that the Word is refined like silver seven times. As seven is the perfect number, this means that the silver – or the Word of God it is referring to – is completely pure as a result. There is no falsehood in God's statements, no deception in His promises and no flattery on His lips. God's Word is:

- Purified and refined
- Without blemish or fault
- The real thing, not a fake or relative version of truth
- Trustworthy
- Of the highest value

This means that I can trust what He says and believe that:

- 1. **He loves me.** “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) I don’t have to try hard to get God to like me, because He already deeply, perfectly, unconditionally loved me before I could do anything for Him.
- 2. **He is a promise-keeping God.** “Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)
- 3. **His Word is true and applicable to my life.** “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 4. **His Word is a refuge I can run into.** “As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.” (2 Samuel 22:31) This is not the only time that the Word alludes to God’s Word being a refuge for us to run into.

Let us have this confidence that even though people – even good people – can be unreliable at times, we can place our trust in God and His Word.

List ways in which you have not taken God by His Word, where you’ve doubted the truth or reliability of His words. Use Notes page if need be.

Take each area that you have listed and write down how you can change your thinking, actions or lifestyle in this area.

God’s Word CAN BE TRUSTED.

Proverbs 30:5

*Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to
those who take refuge in him*

Heavenly Father, as I read Your Word, help
me to know deep down that your Word is
flawless and proven true. Holy Spirit, may
You enlighten my mind and ignite in my
heart an even greater love for Your Holy
Word. Help me to know, love and
understand You better through your Word
and to recognise how You want me to apply
Your Word to my daily life.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is *ENDURING*

Read Isaiah 40:8

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. **Isaiah 40:8**

Additional Reading: Psalm 103:15, Ps 144:4, Psalm 102:11, 1 Peter 1:24, Job 14:2, Job 8:9, James 1:10-11, James 4:14

Isaiah contrasts the brevity and fading vitality of humanity to the enduring nature of God's Word, which is eternal. All people, irrespective of our condition or abilities, share the same fate – the days of our lives, like the grass of the field, are here today and gone tomorrow. Our vitality, like the flower of the field, exposed to animal hooves, pests, scorching heat and wind, eventually fades away. In contrast, God's Word remains forever and will never pass away.

All our good efforts to extend our lives and be healthy notwithstanding, does not ultimately change our fate. These contrasting truths are supposed to bring us to the realisation that the only question that remains is how we position ourselves and our passing humanity in respect to God's Word, which is eternal.

We have to hold the tension and the struggle between our own vulnerability and the enduring Word of God. Proverbs 30:5 states that "every word of God proves true; he is a shield to all who take refuge in him". In other words, when we put our trust in the eternal Word of God, God himself becomes a shield about us.

We are no longer so extremely vulnerable to the issues of life (the field) because the enduring Word of God buffets us, strengthens us and comfort us when we need it.

As a result, we consider the brevity of our days and our fading vitality not as something negative or to be avoided but rather in the light of the enduring nature of God’s Word. The Word of God tells us that we no longer need to be intimidated by difficulty in life and even death. Why? Because we are held by the Word of God that transcends our reality and goes beyond our circumstances, binding us to the reality in which God dwells. This is an unbreakable anchor for the soul.

Consider today the brevity of your life and the enduring value of God’s Word, which is worthy of full acceptance and a surety in the chaos of life.

How did trusting God’s Word sustain you in a recent difficult time you experienced?

Does your faith in God’s Word get shifted when you become battle weary and exhausted? What can you do to strengthen your faith during these times?

God’s Word *SUSTAINS US.*

Isaiah 40:8

*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word
of our God will stand forever.*

Thank you Lord that even though we are vulnerable and weak, your Word sustains us. You comfort us through your eternal Word. You strengthen us and keep us going. Thank you for the gift of your Word and your promises through which we can live a godly life in this world.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is *FOOD*

Read Jeremiah 15:16

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts. **Jeremiah 15:16**

Additional Reading: Psalm 19:10, Proverbs 4:20-23, 2 Cor 3:18

Think of your Bible like a table, spilling over with nourishing 'soul' food – spiritual nutrition we desperately need to devour and digest daily. This rich fare is not boring as it includes promises, instruction, wisdom, comfort and encouragement. Like any good host, God tells us to, “Come and get it!” Yet sadly, we often fail to heed His Spirit’s urging. We depend on everything but Him and wonder why our faith is feeble and our steadfastness unsteady! We need to remember that “the Bible is bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions”.

This is the context in which the prophet Jeremiah found himself. In the earlier verses, he was in distress at the gravity of the message God had given him to deliver to the people of Judah. It was a message of doom and gloom, and the recipients were rebellious towards it. The people were unrepentant and even cursed Jeremiah. But watch what Jeremiah does even in this difficult situation. He chooses to cry out and express his dependence on the Lord by saying, “Your words were found”. Jeremiah was seeking God’s words, not words of man, and he found them.

This is a good reminder that even in times of distress or discouragement, the best place (Person) to turn to is the Living Word of God. Jeremiah had a passion for God’s Word, a heart attitude that as sons and daughters we should seek to cultivate. He searched the Scriptures, diligently studied it, devoured, digested it and found and experienced its soul-reviving power and nourishment. It became part of him. Spurgeon said, “Jeremiah has let us into a secret.... His outer life, consisting in his perpetual, faithful ministry, was accounted for by his inward love of the Word which he preached”.

Reading a will, is not interesting until you find that you have a part in it. There are repetitions and legal phrases, but if there is a legacy left to you in that will, the writing will be fascinating, and you will rejoice over it as one who finds the spoil! Oh, how we need to get into the word of God today so that it might get inside of us! We don’t need just a little surface learning of a few rules, guidelines or a few steps to take to clean up our acts. Instead, we need to eat the pure Word, digest it and allow it to become a part of our very being. In doing so, the Spirit will breathe joy and delight to our heart, just as He did for Jeremiah. Only the Word of God can do this. To know the Father’s heart, the Son’s love and the Spirit’s power should always be the goal when we seek God’s Word, but we must be looking for it, to find it.

One of the greatest blessings God can give His children is a hunger for His Word. If you do not have it, then ask Him to give it to you here. Then continue to cultivate a taste for His Word.

How do you best assimilate God's Word so that it fills up your body?

God’s Word *PRODUCES DELIGHT.*

Jeremiah 15:16

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.

Heavenly Father, thank you for Your written Word and for Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. I pray that your Word would become the joy and delight of my heart as I read and meditate and pray through the Scriptures. I pray that I would be a doer of your Word, trusting in your precepts and promises, no matter what difficulties and trials I may face as an individual or we may face as a country. Help me to hold fast to that which is good and do only those things which are pleasing in Your sight. Thank you that you have called me by name and that by keeping your Word precious to me, I will always be nourished and sustained.

In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is Like *SPOIL*

Read Psalm 119:162

I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. **Psalm 119:162**

Additional Reading: Psalm 19, Psalm 119:9-11

I love watching movies where someone has a faded treasure map that they are following with the hope that it will lead them to treasure – and to witness their joy when X marks the spot to life-changing wealth! Have you ever wished you could find a huge treasure somewhere? Like an item that was passed down through generations that is worth a fortune, a suitcase of money on a deserted beach or a bag of rare gemstones just waiting for a new owner.

Actually, according to Psalm 119:162 we have a treasure in our possession that is worth far more than any precious stone - the Psalmist called the Word of God: a "great spoil". In Psalm 19:10, the Word of God is compared to gold - the most precious material known in those days. In fact, no other book that has ever been written has changed lives, communities or societies like the Bible has done – it truly is a treasure waiting to be discovered! One that brings joy to anyone who opens it.

I wonder whether we approach the Word of God like it has unlimited value? Do we allow the Bible to sit gathering dust on our shelf or is it wearing out from frequent use? Do we allow our electronic Bible app to remain closed for days or is the Bible app's icons one of the most used icons on our home screen?

Here are some practical things you can do to show that you treasure the Word:

- 1. **Read it:** Make it part of your daily habit to read a passage of the Bible every day.
- 2. **Digest it:** Don't just rush through a passage but slow down to allow God to reveal deeper insights to you.
- 3. **Study it:** go deeper into the Word by finding out what it meant in the original context and how it relates to us today.
- 4. **Learn it:** start with a few verses or a short chapter like Psalm 23 and practice saying it until you know it off by heart.
- 5. **Obey it:** do what it tells you to do no matter how difficult it may be at times.

Remember, God speaks to us directly through his Word and the time we spend in the Word reveals whether we treat it as a great spoil or as largely irrelevant to our lives!

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being low and 10 being high) how would you rate how much you treasure God's Word based on how much time you spend reading the Word and applying it to your life? _____

Select a passage of the Bible, like a Psalm, and read it through a few times and then answer these questions: Is there a Sin to Confess? Is there a Promise to Claim? Is there an Example to Follow? Is there a Command to Obey? Is there a Knowledge to Gain?

God's Word BRINGS US JOY.

Psalm 119:162

*I rejoice at your word like one who finds
great spoil.*

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the gift
of your Word to me. I have not always
treasured it like I should but I know that it
contains all that I need to know you
deeper, to love people better and to
transform the world around me. Help me to
be faithful to read, study and obey your
Word every day from this day forward.
Meet with me as I open my Bible and show
me how to live in a way that honours you.
In Jesus' name.

AMEN

[illegible]

The Word Is *Jesus*

Read John 1:1,14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1,14

**Additional Reading: Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-4,
John 1:1-5; 9-14, 1 John 1:1-4**

Jesus is the Word. He is the physical manifestation of all of God's communication to us. He is the full counsel of God; the complete expression of God's beauty, will, nature and mission. It was through Him that the world and everything in it were made and it is by the Word of His power that all things continue to exist. In light of the magnificence of who He is and the existence that all things owe Him, the right posture for all of creation is that of adoration and worship of Him.

Despite His supremacy over all things, He chose to come to earth as a vulnerable baby; to reveal God the Father within the brokenness we had brought to His perfect world. The impact of God's Word arriving in the human form of Jesus was to initiate God's Kingdom coming on earth. Jesus' life smashed the religious misconceptions that had kept us busy with fruitless subservience to a version of God that never existed. It gave us a pattern of righteous living empowered by the indwelling Spirit that far exceeded anything the Law had to offer. And it made a way for our self-exalting and self-destroying autonomy to be overthrown.

In short, He brought us grace, truth and salvation from sin. He lifted us out of our distorted view of what it meant to be human and restored to us our true identity as sons and daughters of God.

Through Jesus, the Word, our limited understanding can be enlightened with eternal truths that have escaped mankind for millennia – YHWH is who our hearts long for – YHWH is the answer to all our problems – YHWH is the source of all joy and life. Through Jesus, the Word, we see clearly that our future is filled with hope because He has overcome the world. Through Him, we come to know that all people of all tribes and tongues are our brothers and sisters and that we are born again into a new community – the Church.

Jesus opens our eyes to see truth, He opens our hearts to receive grace, and He opens our relationships to give love – because He is the Word.

How does knowing Jesus enable you to see yourself, others and the world differently?

Have you given Jesus the right amount of reverence, awe and pre-eminence in your life, and have you allowed Him to love you well and to love through you well?

Jesus, the Word, REVEALS GOD IN ALL HIS GLORY.

John 1:1,14

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Lord Jesus, we are so grateful to you. Thank you for coming to earth to find me, my family, friends and community. We owe you everything: our existence, our world and our relationships. Lord, help us to live worthy of all you have done for us. Help us to love you and love one another well – as you have loved us. Help us to see ourselves, others and your creation as you do, delighting in what you delight in and weeping over that which breaks your heart. Help us to walk bravely into our futures, confident that you are with us and that you have already overcome all the obstacles that will come our way. Thank you for the Holy Spirit that dwells in us, reminding us of your Word and empowering us to live righteously. We receive your grace daily and delight to live in your presence. Thank you for showing us the Father and for sending us into our world as He sent you. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]

conclusion

The Word Is Our FOUNDATION

Read Matthew 7:24–27

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **Matthew 7:24**

Additional Reading: 1 Peter 2:4–10

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shares with his disciples and the crowds what life in the Kingdom should be like. He then ends this famous sermon with this warning: will you be a wise builder and build your life on the rock of my words? Or will you be a foolish builder and disregard my words, building your life on the sand?

If you live somewhere that experiences frequent flash floods, then this illustration that Jesus uses of building your life on a firm foundation will be relevant to you. In a matter of minutes, torrential rains can tear through with power, destroying what was once a beautiful home. And just like storms reveal the state of a building's foundation, the storms of life reveal whether or not we have built our life on the firm foundation of God's Word.

During the past 21-days, we've learnt that the Word of God is like bread necessary for our spiritual nourishment, a seed planted in our heart and bearing fruit, a light illuminating our path and guiding us into all wisdom, a mirror showing us who we

Really are, a hammer that can crush our sin-hardened hearts, and a sword able to pierce to the core of who we are and bring transformation.

The question is, what will you do moving forward from this fast? Will you be a wise builder who builds your life on a firm foundation? While it has been a powerful time of coming together and experiencing God and hearing from him, participating in an annual five-day fast is not enough to build your life on a firm foundation. It's in the lifestyle of daily reading and obeying God's Word that we build in such a way that the storms of life can't tear us down.

Abiding in God's Word is abiding in Jesus, the living Word of God. Is Jesus the foundation on which your life is built?

The word “abide” means “to remain stable or fixed in a state; to continue in a place.”¹ In 2022 and beyond, how will you make a renewed commitment to abide in—reading, understanding, believing, and obeying—God's Word?

God's Word *IS OUR SOLID FOUNDATION.*

1. Meriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “abide,” accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/abide>.

Matthew 7:24

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine
and does them will be like a wise man who
built his house on the rock.*

Heavenly Father, I thank you for what you have done in my life this week. Thank you that you show up when I seek your face and that you are faithful to speak to me. You have given the gift of your Word that I may build my life on the solid foundation of who you are. Help me to abide in your Word daily that I may hide it in my heart and experience your life-transforming power. In Jesus' name,

AMEN

[illegible]



EVERY NATION

Every Nation is a global family of churches and ministries that exists to honor God by establishing Christ centered, Spirit empowered, socially responsible churches and campus ministries in every nation.