

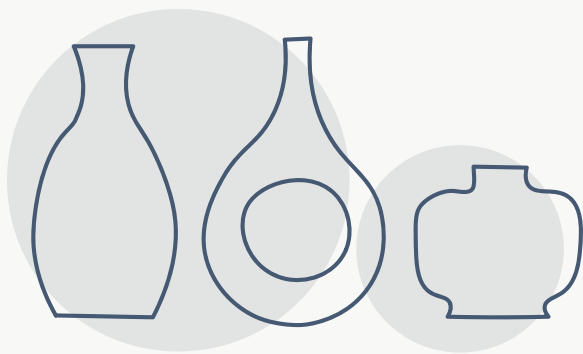


Draw Near

A LIFE OF PRAYER AND FASTING

SHAPED
BY SCRIPTURE

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE



Dr. Scott K. Thomas II



LONEOAK
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

June

Shaped by Scripture

Introduction to *Shaped by Scripture*

Shaped by Scripture exists to help you plant God’s Word deep in your heart so it can transform your life. This resource is designed to guide you toward Scripture memorization and to equip you with the Word of God. Life in general—and the Christian life in particular—is spiritual warfare. Every believer faces continual pressures from the world, the culture, and the enemy of our souls. Yet God does not leave us defenseless. He gives us His Word to shape us, strengthen us, and sharpen us for victory.

The Bible says in Proverbs 7:2-3, “Keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Notice how this verse begins with both a command and a promise: *Keep the Lord’s commandments—and live*. When God’s Word is hidden in your heart, it becomes your shield, your guide, and your joy.

Why We Created *Shaped by Scripture*

In an effort to promote Scripture memorization and spiritual growth, *Shaped by Scripture* was developed to guide participants in learning, understanding, and applying God’s Word. Over the course of a year, you will explore 12 unique themes covering 50 selected verses (with mid-year and end-of-year breaks for reflection). Each monthly booklet introduces a new theme, providing both an “entry point” for new participants and a “re-engagement point” for returning participants.

How to Use This Resource

Each week follows a simple rhythm designed to help you memorize Scripture and grasp its meaning:

- **Day 1 – Memorization & Meditation:** Learn the verse, reflect on the weekly theme, and receive prompts to begin memorization.

- **Day 2 – Contextual Understanding:** Discover the historical and biblical context so you can see how the verse fits into the larger story of Scripture.
- **Day 3 – Theological Insight:** Based on context, explore what the passage teaches about God, His character, and His purposes.
- **Day 4 – Personal Application:** Using the Inductive Bible Study method (Observe, Interpret, Apply), discover how the verse directly speaks into your life.
- **Day 5 – Recap & Reinforcement:** Review, rehearse, and reinforce what you've learned to lock the verse and its truths into your heart.

A Word of Encouragement

For some, memorizing Scripture comes naturally. For the rest of us, it feels daunting. Be encouraged—*Shaped by Scripture* is designed to support learners at every level. By investing a few focused minutes each day, you will develop the skill of Scripture memorization and also a deeper appreciation of God's Word. Over time, you'll look back and realize you've retained far more than you expected, and more importantly, you'll be shaped by the living Word of God.

Dr. Scott K. Thomas II
Senior Pastor

Draw Near: Introduction

A Life of Prayer and Fasting

June 1–26, 2026

An active life of prayer, joined with the discipline of fasting, is essential to the spiritual vitality of every believer. Prayer is more than a religious habit; it is a living conversation with God, the means by which the believer draws near to Him in dependence, trust, and worship. Through prayer, the heart is shaped, the mind is renewed, and the will is aligned with God’s purposes. Fasting, though often neglected, deepens this communion. It is a physical expression of spiritual hunger, a voluntary setting aside of earthly comforts in order to seek God with greater focus and humility. Together, prayer and fasting form a rhythm of nearness to God that strengthens faith and cultivates spiritual clarity.

The theme *Draw Near: A Life of Prayer and Fasting* is designed to renew in believers a passion for consistent, meaningful prayer and a clear understanding of biblical fasting. In a distracted and anxious age, many Christians struggle to maintain a steady prayer life or to see fasting as relevant. This section of the curriculum seeks to address both concerns by grounding these practices in Scripture and by presenting them as accessible, life-giving disciplines. The goal is not to add a burden, but to invite believers into a deeper relationship with God—one marked by intimacy, trust, and spiritual power.

Each week explores a key aspect of this life of nearness. Week 1, *Private Prayer, Powerful Connection* (Matthew 6:6), emphasizes the importance of personal, hidden prayer as the foundation of a genuine relationship with God. Week 2, *Prayer Over Panic* (Psalm 55:22), calls believers to bring their anxieties to the Lord, trusting Him to sustain and care for them. Week 3, *Fasting for Freedom* (Matthew 6:17–18), introduces fasting as a quiet, sincere act of devotion that loosens the grip of worldly distractions. Finally, Week 4, *Prayer that Moves Heaven* (James 5:16), highlights the power of righteous, faithful prayer to bring real change according to God’s will.

Week 1	<i>Private Prayer, Powerful Connection.</i>	Matthew 6:6
Week 2	<i>Prayer Over Panic</i>	Psalm 55:22
Week 3	<i>Fasting for Freedom</i>	Matthew 6:17–18
Week 4	<i>Prayer that Moves Heaven</i>	James 5:16

Private Prayer, Powerful Connection Monday, June 1, 2026

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

Late one night, an amateur radio operator sat at his desk with headphones on, slowly turning the dial on his transceiver. Static filled the air. Voices drifted in and out, broken and unclear. Then, suddenly, a signal locked into place. Though separated by thousands of miles, two strangers began to speak with surprising clarity, as if they were sitting across from one another. The difference was not greater power or better equipment, but the careful work of finding the right frequency and removing the surrounding noise.

Prayer often feels much the same. Our lives are filled with noise—busy schedules, constant notifications, responsibilities, and distractions that compete for our attention. Even when we pause to pray, our thoughts wander, our focus weakens, and our hearts can feel distant from God. Many believers understand the importance of prayer yet struggle to experience it as a deep and life-giving connection. Matthew 6:6 speaks directly into this reality, inviting believers to step away from the noise and enter into a focused, private encounter with their Heavenly Father. The theme of this week—*Private Prayer, Powerful Connection*—reminds us that the most meaningful spiritual conversations often take place when no one else is listening.

Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 6:6 comes within His teaching on genuine righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). In Matthew 6:1–18, He exposes a common weakness in religious life: performing spiritual acts for the approval of others rather than for true devotion to God. He warns against praying “to be seen by others” (Matthew 6:5). The issue is not public prayer itself, which Scripture affirms (Acts 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:1–2), but the motive behind it. Prayer becomes weak when it is shaped by the desire for human recognition instead of a desire for communion with God.

While this warning remains relevant, many believers today face an additional challenge. Prayer is often reduced to routine words, rushed moments, or last-resort cries in times of trouble. Private spaces of prayer are neglected, even while outward expressions of faith continue. Jesus teaches that true spiritual strength does not come from visible activity, but from hidden fellowship with the Father. What is cultivated in secret shapes what is lived publicly.

Jesus begins with the simple phrase, “But when you pray...” (Matthew 6:6). Prayer is assumed to be a normal and regular part of a disciple’s life. It is not optional, but essential. It reflects a posture of dependence on God and a recognition of our need for Him (Luke 18:1).

He continues, “...go into your room and shut the door...” This refers to a private space, a place set apart from distraction and from the attention of others. The instruction is not about location alone, but about intention. Prayer flourishes where there is focus, sincerity, and a willingness to be alone with God. This reflects the pattern of Jesus Himself, who often withdrew to quiet places to pray (Mark 1:35).

Jesus then says, “...pray to your Father who is in secret.” Prayer is deeply relational. It is not a performance or a formula, but a conversation with a loving Father who knows and cares for His children (Matthew 6:8). The “secret” place is where honesty grows, where burdens are laid down, and where the believer learns to trust God more fully.

Finally, Jesus promises, “...your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” God is attentive to the prayers offered in quiet faith. His reward is not human praise, but His presence, peace, wisdom, and sustaining grace (Philippians 4:6–7). He delights in hearing His people and responding according to His will (Jeremiah 33:3).

The image of the radio operator helps us understand this truth: meaningful connection requires removing interference and tuning in carefully. Matthew 6:6 calls believers to develop this hidden life of prayer—not for display, but for real communion with God.

This week, as you reflect on this passage, consider your own patterns of prayer. Are they shaped more by urgency and distraction, or by intentional time with the Lord? True power in the Christian life is not found in what others see, but in what is cultivated in secret. When you

step away from the noise, close the door, and speak honestly with your Father, you will find that private prayer truly is a powerful connection— one that clears the static of life and allows you to experience God with renewed clarity and peace.

Memorization & Meditation

1. Read the verse aloud - Read Matthew 6:6 slowly, out loud, at least three times. Pay attention to each phrase.
2. Write the verse down - Write Matthew 6:6 in your own handwriting. As you write, say each word quietly to yourself. Writing helps strengthen memory and slows you down so you can notice details you might otherwise miss.
3. Reflect on the meaning – Consider the following questions: What does Jesus assume about prayer in this verse? Why does He emphasize going into a private place and shutting the door? What does it mean that God “sees in secret”?
4. Strategy: Set a clear and realistic goal for memorizing this verse. Will you aim to have it memorized by Day 2 or Day 3? When will you review it today (morning, midday, evening)? Write your goal here:
I will memorize Matthew 6:6 by _____.
5. Pray the verse – Turn the verse into a personal prayer. Speak to God using the truth of Scripture.

Sample Prayer:

Father, thank You for inviting me to come to You in prayer. Help me to step away from distractions and meet You in a quiet place. Teach me to seek You not for the attention of others, but for a real relationship with You. Remind me that You see me, You hear me, and You care about what I bring before You. Shape my heart to desire time with You in secret, and let that time strengthen my faith and trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

Matthew 6:6 is part of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), where He explains what true righteousness looks like in the life of His followers. In this section, Jesus is not simply giving instructions for behavior; He is addressing the heart. He contrasts outward religious activity with inward devotion, showing that God is concerned with what we do, but also with why we do it.

In Matthew 6:1–18, Jesus focuses on three key spiritual practices: giving, praying, and fasting. Each of these was a normal part of Jewish religious life. However, Jesus exposes a serious problem. Some people were practicing these disciplines in order to be seen and praised by others. Their actions appeared spiritual, but their motives were misplaced. Instead of seeking God, they were seeking attention. Jesus describes such people as having already received their reward—the approval of others.

It is within this framework that Jesus gives His instruction on prayer in Matthew 6:6. He begins by warning against praying publicly for the purpose of being noticed (6:5). Then He offers a different approach: private, sincere prayer directed toward God alone. When Jesus says to “go into your room and shut the door,” He is not condemning public prayer altogether. Rather, He is emphasizing the importance of personal, undistracted communion with the Father. The “room” refers to a private space, highlighting intentional withdrawal from both distraction and display.

Jesus also emphasizes the relational nature of prayer by using the term “Father.” This reminds believers that prayer is not performance, but a personal conversation with a loving and attentive God. The phrase “who is in secret” points to God’s unseen presence. Even when no one else observes, God sees fully and responds faithfully.

Understanding this context helps clarify Jesus’ main point: the value of prayer is not found in how it appears to others, but in the sincerity

of the heart before God. True prayer flows from a desire to know God, trust Him, and depend on Him. It is cultivated in private, but it shapes every part of a believer's life.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Matthew 6:1–18. As you read, look for the repeated pattern in Jesus' teaching on giving, prayer, and fasting. Notice how He contrasts public display with private devotion. Consider how this broader context deepens your understanding of Matthew 6:6.

Reflection Questions:

1. What problem does Jesus identify in the way some people practiced prayer in Matthew 6:5?
2. How does Matthew 6:6 provide a different approach to prayer?
3. According to the passage, what does God value most in our spiritual practices?

Memorization Reminder: Continue working on memorizing Matthew 6:6. Repeat the verse several times today—out loud and from memory. Try recalling it without looking, and review any parts that are difficult. Aim to have the verse fully memorized by the end of today or tomorrow.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

Prayer, in the New Testament, is more than a spiritual practice; it is a vital expression of a personal relationship with God the Father. Matthew 6:6 highlights this truth by directing believers to prayer “to your Father who is in secret.” This language is deeply theological. Jesus does not present God as distant or impersonal, but as Father—one who knows, cares, listens, and responds. Prayer, therefore, is not rooted in ritual performance but in relational access.

This understanding of prayer is grounded in the broader teaching of the New Testament. Through Jesus Christ, believers are brought into a restored relationship with God (John 1:12; Romans 5:1). Sin had created separation, but through Christ’s work, that barrier is removed. As a result, prayer becomes the natural response of a child speaking to a Father. It is not an attempt to earn God’s attention, but a privilege made possible by grace. Hebrews 4:16 expresses this clearly, inviting believers to “approach the throne of grace with confidence.” This confidence is based on the finished work of Christ.

Prayer also reflects dependence. When believers pray, they acknowledge their need for God’s wisdom, provision, and guidance. Jesus Himself modeled this dependence throughout His earthly ministry, often withdrawing to pray (Luke 5:16). His example teaches that prayer is not reserved for moments of crisis, but is an ongoing pattern of life. It is through this regular communion that believers grow in trust and alignment with God’s will.

Additionally, prayer is shaped by intimacy and honesty. Because God is Father, believers can speak openly, bringing both needs and struggles before Him (Philippians 4:6). This does not diminish God’s holiness; rather, it highlights His grace. The same God who is sovereign over all things also invites personal conversation with His people.

Matthew 6:6 reminds us that this relationship is often most clearly experienced in private. Removed from distraction and public attention, believers are able to focus fully on God. In this quiet space, prayer becomes more than communication, but communion—an ongoing relationship marked by trust, reverence, and love.

Understanding prayer in this way transforms it from obligation into opportunity. It is more than a simple spiritual act; it is how believers live in fellowship with God the Father.

Reflection Questions:

1. According to the New Testament, what makes it possible for believers to approach God as Father in prayer?

2. How does viewing prayer as a relationship change the way a believer practices prayer?

3. What does prayer reveal about a believer's dependence on God?

Memorization Reminder: Practice Matthew 6:6 today. Try to recite the verse from memory without looking. Focus especially on any phrases you find difficult. Repeat it throughout the day, allowing its truth to shape your understanding of prayer as a personal relationship with your Father.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

Matthew 6:6 calls believers to move from simply understanding prayer to actively practicing it. Using the inductive Bible study method, we begin with observation, move to interpretation, and then focus on application.

First, we observe what Jesus says: “go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” The instruction is clear and intentional. Jesus describes a deliberate action—stepping away, closing the door, and entering a private space. This highlights the importance of removing distractions and creating an environment where focused prayer can take place. The emphasis is not on the physical location alone, but on the posture of the heart. It is a call to sincerity and undivided attention toward God.

Next, we interpret the meaning. Jesus teaches that prayer is relational in nature. The phrase “your Father” reveals the identity of God as one who knows, cares, and welcomes His children. Prayer becomes a personal conversation rooted in that relationship. The words “in secret” point to the unseen presence of God. He is present in the quiet place and attentive to every word spoken. The promise that “your Father who sees in secret will reward you” assures believers that God responds to sincere prayer. His response includes His presence, peace, wisdom, and sustaining grace.

Finally, we apply this truth to daily life. Matthew 6:6 invites believers to establish a steady rhythm of private prayer. This may involve choosing a specific time each day and identifying a place where interruptions are limited. A quiet room, a chair, or a designated space can become a regular meeting place with God. Approaching prayer with honesty and humility allows the believer to speak openly, bringing both needs and gratitude before God

Application also includes developing consistency. Growth in prayer takes place over time through repeated practice. Setting a simple plan for daily prayer helps form a lasting habit. Begin with a manageable amount of time and remain faithful to it. As this pattern continues, the practice of private prayer becomes more natural and meaningful.

Matthew 6:6 calls believers to cultivate a steady and faithful life of prayer. In that quiet place, the believer learns to listen, trust, and grow. Prayer becomes an ongoing relationship marked by attention to God and dependence on Him. This daily practice shapes the heart and strengthens faith in lasting ways.

Reflection Questions:

1. What specific time and place can you set aside each day for private prayer?

2. What steps can you take to maintain focus during your time with God?

3. How can you build consistency in your daily prayer practice?

Memorization Reminder: You are nearing the end of the week. Review Matthew 6:6 in full today, repeating it slowly and carefully. Tomorrow, you will aim to recall it from memory with confidence.

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

This week focused on the meaning and practice of private prayer. We learned that prayer is a personal relationship with God the Father, cultivated in quiet and intentional moments. Jesus teaches that sincere, focused prayer shapes our hearts, strengthens our faith, and draws us into deeper communion with God.

Recite from Memory

Say Matthew 6:6 out loud from memory. Take your time and focus. If you struggle, review and try again until you can say it with confidence.

Write It Out

Write Matthew 6:6 from memory. Check for accuracy and correct any mistakes. Writing reinforces what your mind is learning and helps secure the verse in your memory.

Reflect

Consider what this verse has taught you this week: What have you learned about private prayer? How has your understanding of prayer grown? What changes have you begun to make in your daily prayer life?

Share It

Share Matthew 6:6 or one insight from this week with someone else. This could be a family member, friend, or group. Speaking truth out loud helps deepen your understanding and encourages others in their faith.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for inviting me into a personal relationship with You through prayer. Thank You that You see me, hear me, and care for me even in quiet and unseen moments. Help me to remain faithful in setting aside time to meet with You. Teach me to focus my heart, to speak honestly, and to listen for Your guidance. Let my time in private shape my life and draw me closer to You each day. In Jesus' name, amen.

SHINING A LIGHT ON
WHO **JESUS** REALLY IS

ILLUMINATION STATION

JOHN 8:12

VBS
JUNE 15-19

This year's theme is *"Illumination Station:
Shining A Light On Who Jesus Really Is"*.

VBS is open to children in Kindergarten
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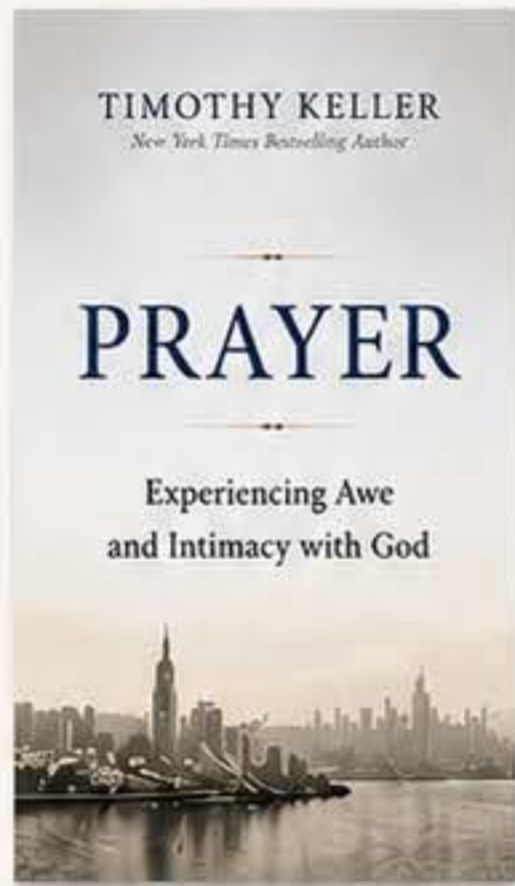
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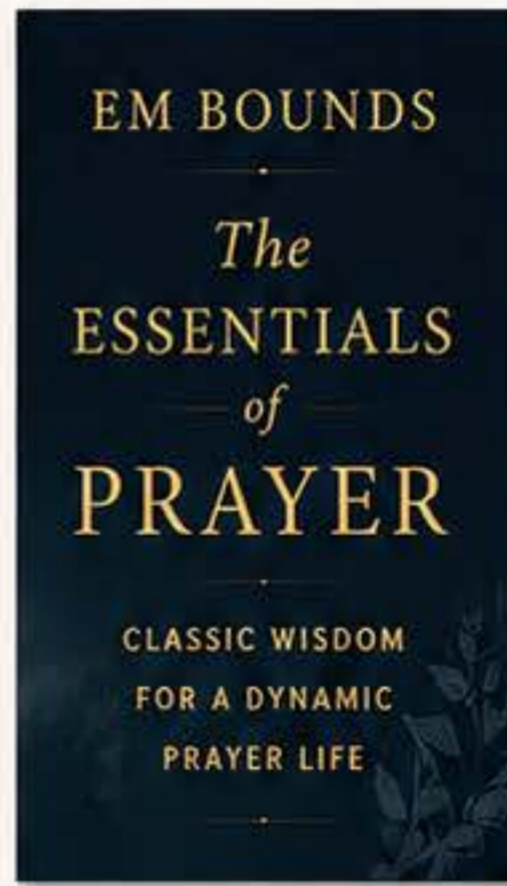
BOOKS



**THE BATTLE PLAN
FOR PRAYER**
STEPHEN AND
ALEX KENDRICK



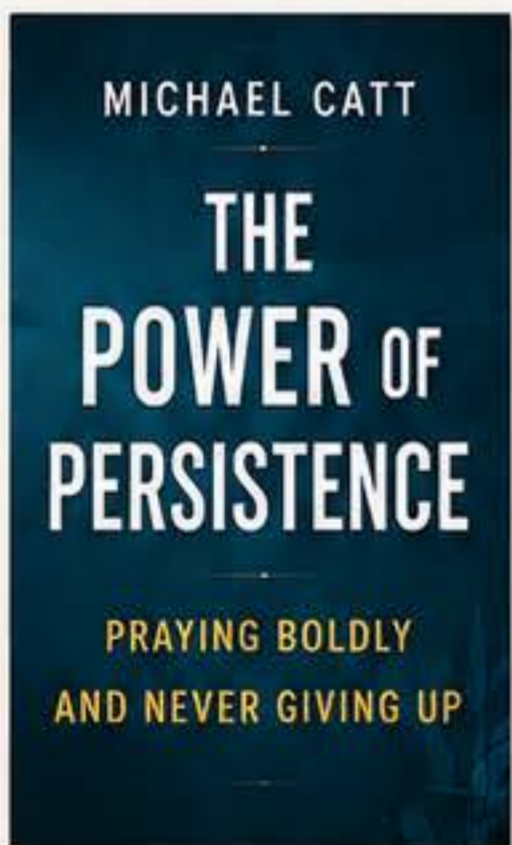
**PRAYER:
EXPERIENCING AWE AND
INTIMACY WITH GOD**
TIMOTHY KELLER



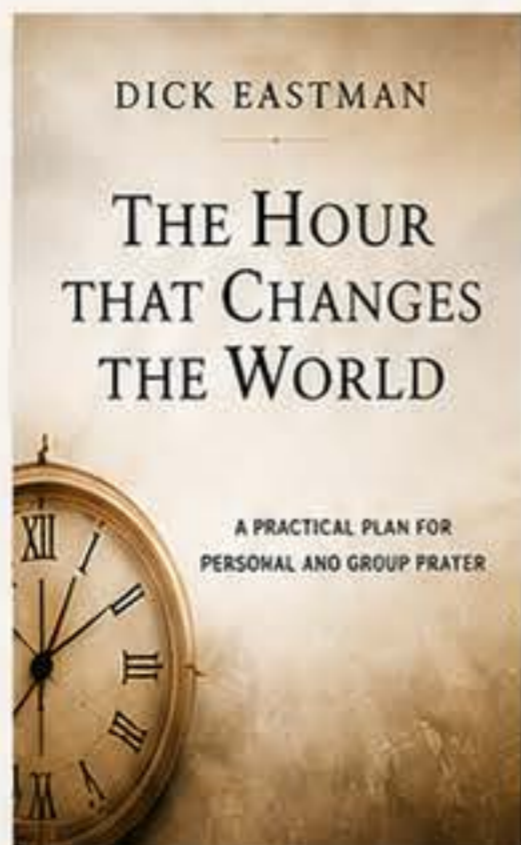
**EM BOUNDS:
THE ESSENTIALS
OF PRAYER**
E. M. BOUNDS



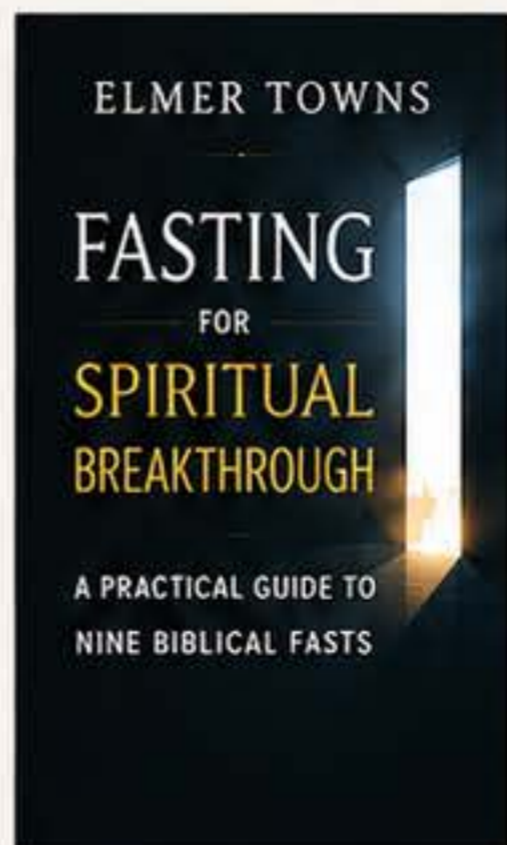
**DON'T JUST
STAND THERE,
PRAY SOMETHING**
RONALD DUNN



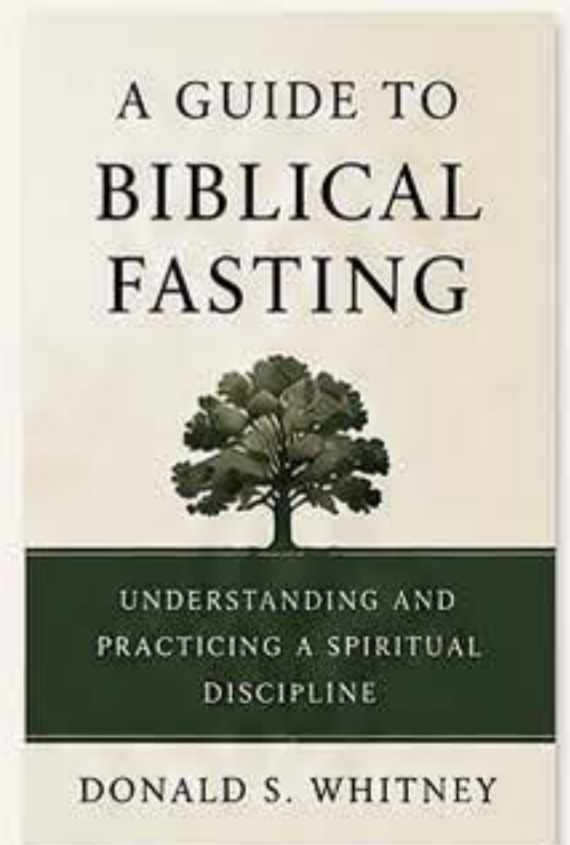
**THE POWER
OF PERSISTENCE**
MICHAEL CATT



**THE HOUR THAT
CHANGES THE WORLD**
DICK EASTMAN



**FASTING FOR
SPIRITUAL
BREAKTHROUGH**
ELMER TOWNS



**A GUIDE TO
BIBLICAL FASTING**
DONALD WHITNEY

“Cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Psalm 55:22

Psalm 55:22 speaks with clarity into the lived tension between anxiety and trust. This verse does not emerge from abstraction; it addresses the deep, personal weight that often presses upon the human heart. It calls for a decisive response to that weight and anchors that response in the faithful character of God.

In November 1873, the Atlantic Ocean carried both promise and tragedy. Horatio Spafford, a Chicago attorney and devoted Christian, had planned to travel to Europe with his family. Unexpected business demands delayed him, so he sent his wife, Anna, and their four daughters ahead on the French steamship *Ville du Havre*. Days into the journey, as the ship crossed the cold waters of the Atlantic, it collided with another vessel, the *Loch Earn*, in the darkness of night. The impact tore through the ship’s hull. Within minutes, chaos filled the decks as passengers scrambled to lifeboats. The sea surged violently, and the great ship began to sink.

Anna Spafford gathered her daughters—Annie, Maggie, Bessie, and Tanetta—and prayed with them as the situation worsened. Survivors later recounted that the ship went down in approximately twelve minutes. The waters claimed the lives of all four daughters. Anna was found unconscious, clinging to a piece of wreckage, and eventually rescued. Upon reaching Wales, she sent a telegram to her husband with two devastating words: “Saved alone.”

Horatio Spafford immediately set sail to join his grieving wife. Days later, as his ship moved steadily across the same expanse of ocean, the captain summoned him to the deck. Quietly, he explained that they were passing near the place where the *Ville du Havre* had sunk. The sea stretched endlessly in every direction, its surface concealing the depth of loss beneath. Spafford stood there, confronted with the reality of his grief—no graves to visit, no final goodbyes spoken on land, only the vast and silent waters.

In that moment, he began to write words that would endure far beyond his own sorrow:

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll...*

The hymn *It Is Well with My Soul* emerged from a deliberate act of faith. Spafford did not deny the weight of his loss. He brought that weight before the Lord. His response illustrates a truth that Psalm 55:22 articulates with precision: the burden remains real, yet it can be entrusted to a God who sustains.

David's context in Psalm 55 reflects a similar depth of distress. He writes amid betrayal and personal anguish, describing a heart that trembles and a spirit that feels overwhelmed (Psalm 55:2–5). His words capture the internal chaos that often accompanies crisis. Yet within that turmoil, verse 22 introduces a decisive turn. The verse does not minimize suffering; it redirects the response to it.

The command, "Cast your burden on the Lord," carries the force of intentional action. The Hebrew verb *shalak* conveys the idea of throwing or hurling something away from oneself. This language portrays a decisive transfer rather than a gradual release. The "burden" encompasses what presses heavily upon a person—grief, fear, uncertainty, relational strain, and internal anxiety. Scripture does not instruct the believer to manage these realities independently. Instead, it calls for their transfer to the Lord through prayer. This act requires trust in God's willingness to receive what is placed in His hands.

The promise follows with equal strength: "and he will sustain you." God's sustaining work involves active, ongoing support. He upholds His people, providing strength that meets the demands of each moment. This sustaining presence does not remove the circumstances that produce anxiety, but it equips the believer to stand within them. The language reflects a continuous action—God keeps, nourishes, and stabilizes those who entrust themselves to Him.

The final assurance establishes enduring security: "he will never permit the righteous to be moved." This statement affirms stability grounded in relationship with God. The righteous, those who rely upon Him, remain secure under His care. The promise addresses the fear of

collapse that often accompanies overwhelming circumstances. God's sustaining presence establishes a foundation that holds firm, even when external conditions remain unsettled.

Psalm 55:22 therefore reshapes the instinctive human response to crisis. Panic seeks control and intensifies internal strain; prayer entrusts control to God and opens the way for sustaining grace. Spafford's testimony embodies this shift. He stood over the depths of profound loss and chose to entrust his grief to the Lord. His hymn continues to echo because it reflects a truth that remains constant: the soul finds steadiness when it places its full weight into the hands of a faithful God.

This week, this verse invites you to cultivate that same reflex. The burdens you carry may differ in form, yet the invitation remains the same. Through prayer, you can cast them upon the Lord. Through His faithfulness, you will find sustaining strength. And through His unchanging care, your life will rest on a foundation that cannot be moved.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Read the verse aloud:** Slowly read the verse three times, emphasizing each phrase.
2. **Write the verse down:** Write the verse by hand, pausing to reflect on each portion.
3. **Reflect on the meaning:** What burdens feel most pressing right now? How can you actively place those burdens before the Lord in prayer? What does God's promise to sustain you reveal about His care?
4. **Strategy for Memorization:** Break the verse into phrases and attempt to describe, in your own words, what each phrase means. This exercise helps you think about the words and develop a heart level understanding of the words.
5. **Pray the Verse:**

Lord, I bring my burdens before You, I place them into Your hands with trust. Sustain me with Your strength and keep me steady in Your care. Help me to rest in Your promises today. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Psalm 55:22

Psalm 55 is a deeply personal lament traditionally attributed to King David, and it invites the reader into the inner life of a leader under intense pressure. The superscription identifies David as the author, and both the tone and content align with other psalms that emerge from seasons of crisis (cr. Psalm 3; Psalm 41). This is not detached theological reflection; it is a prayer forged in the immediacy of fear, betrayal, and instability. Understanding this context allows Psalm 55:22 to be heard with its full weight and pastoral force.

The most striking feature of the psalm is its relational dimension. In verse 12–14, David identifies the source of his deepest pain—not an external enemy, but a close companion: “It is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.” This language suggests betrayal within a trusted relationship. Many interpreters connect this to the events surrounding Absalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 15–17), when David’s trusted counselor Ahithophel turned against him. While the psalm does not explicitly name this event, the overlap in themes—political upheaval, personal danger, and relational treachery—provides a historically plausible setting. David speaks as one whose personal and public worlds are unraveling at the same time.

The setting of the psalm also contributes to its intensity. David describes a city filled with “violence and strife” where “oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace” (v. 9, 11). This urban imagery reflects a breakdown of social order and justice. David is not removed from the conflict; he is surrounded by it. The city that once symbolized stability and peace now embodies chaos and threat. This context heightens the emotional urgency of the psalm. His distress arises not only from private grief but also from the collapse of communal trust and security.

Within this setting, the purpose of Psalm 55 becomes clear. It functions both as a plea for deliverance and as a model of faithful lament. David gives voice to the full range of human emotion: anguish (“my heart

is in anguish within me," v. 4), fear ("the terrors of death have fallen upon me," v. 4), and longing for escape ("oh, that I had wings like a dove!" v. 6). These expressions provide language for believers who find themselves overwhelmed. At the same time, the psalm consistently directs these emotions toward God in prayer. David does not suppress his distress; he brings it into the presence of the Lord.

Psalm 55 also displays a clear structural movement. The opening verses are dominated by panic and disorientation, while the latter portion reflects growing confidence in God's justice and care. Verse 22 stands at the center of this movement: "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you." In context, this verse serves as a turning point. David shifts from describing his turmoil to prescribing a response. He exhorts himself—and by extension, the reader—to move from internalized anxiety toward active trust in God. The command to "cast" signals decisive action, while the promise of God's sustaining presence grounds that action in divine faithfulness.

The psalm concludes with an affirmation of God's justice (v. 23), reinforcing the truth that burdens entrusted to the Lord are neither dismissed nor forgotten. Instead, they are met with His righteous action and sustaining grace. In the broader biblical witness, this theme continues as God's people are repeatedly invited to entrust their anxieties to Him (cf. 1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 11:28–30). Psalm 55, therefore, prepares the way for a theology of prayer that rests fully on God's willingness to uphold His people.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Psalm 55 in its entirety.

Reflection Questions:

1. What situation likely forms the background of David's distress, and how does betrayal shape the tone of the psalm?
2. How does the setting of the city contribute to David's sense of anxiety and urgency?
3. In what way does verse 22 function as a turning point within the structure of the psalm?

Memorization Reminder: Continue committing Psalm 55:22 to memory.

“Cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” Psalm 55:22

Scripture consistently presents prayer as the appointed means by which God’s people respond to pressure, uncertainty, and suffering. Psalm 55:22 captures this movement with clarity: burdens are not retained internally but transferred to the Lord through intentional trust. This pattern reflects a broader biblical theology in which prayer functions as the pathway that leads the heart from agitation toward stability in God.

Throughout the Old Testament, prayer emerges as the instinctive response of those who recognize both their need and God’s sufficiency. David models this repeatedly. In Psalm 34:17, he affirms, “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.” This dynamic does not suggest the absence of hardship; it reveals the presence of divine attention and intervention. Prayer brings the believer into active dependence upon God, aligning the heart with His power and purposes.

The Psalms frequently portray prayer as an act of casting burdens upon the Lord. This language appears again in Psalm 62:8: “Trust in him at all times... pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” The imagery of pouring out emphasizes openness and release. The believer does not filter or restrain what is brought before God. Instead, prayer becomes the place where the full weight of human experience is expressed and entrusted. This practice forms a spiritual discipline that strengthens trust over time.

The New Testament continues and deepens this theology. Jesus invites the weary to come to Him directly: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). This invitation establishes prayer as relational access to Christ, where rest is found not in changed circumstances alone but in communion with Him. The apostle Paul reinforces this pattern in Philippians 4:6–7, instructing believers to present every concern to God: “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” The result

is described as “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” guarding the heart and mind. Prayer, therefore, serves as a means through which divine peace actively stabilizes the inner life.

Peter echoes this same principle in 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” This instruction connects directly with Psalm 55:22, demonstrating continuity across Scripture. The act of casting is grounded in God’s personal care. Prayer becomes the expression of confidence in that care, allowing the believer to release anxiety into God’s hands.

In this way, prayer functions as spiritual formation in action. It trains the believer to respond to crisis by turning toward God rather than remaining consumed by internal strain. As this pattern develops, prayer becomes a ready resource in moments of pressure. It engages the mind with truth, directs the heart toward trust, and anchors the soul in God’s sustaining presence. Through consistent practice, prayer equips the believer with a steady, God-centered response to life’s most difficult seasons.

Reflection Questions:

1. How do the Psalms describe the relationship between prayer and God’s response to His people?
2. What connection does Philippians 4:6–7 make between prayer and the experience of peace?
3. How does the command to “cast” anxieties on God shape the way believers approach Him in times of difficulty?

Memorization Reminder: Continue working to hide Psalm 55:22 in your heart. Repeat it throughout the day, write it again, and reflect on each phrase. Let the verse shape your response so that prayer becomes your first movement in every moment of pressure.

“Cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Psalm 55:22

Psalm 55:22 invites a deeply personal response that flows from careful observation and thoughtful reflection. The verse presents a clear action and a grounded promise: “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” The language calls for intentional participation. The burden is something real and present, and that act of casting requires a conscious decision to place that weight into the hands of God.

Observation begins with recognizing the nature of the burden. In the context of Psalm 55, David carries emotional distress, relational betrayal, and external pressure. The verse does not narrow the definition of burden, which allows it to encompass the full range of what weighs upon the heart. This includes responsibilities that feel overwhelming, relationships that feel strained, and uncertainties that press on the mind. The instruction directs attention away from internal management of these burdens and toward a relational act with God.

Interpretation centers on the meaning of casting. The term communicates deliberate release. This involves more than acknowledgement; it involves transfer. The believer actively entrusts concerns to the Lord through prayer. This movement reflects trust in God’s ability and willingness to sustain. The promise of sustaining speaks of God’s ongoing involvement. He upholds, strengthens, and stabilizes those who rely on Him. The assurance that the righteous will not be moved reinforces the security found in God’s care. Stability emerges from dependence upon Him.

Application flows from this understanding. The verse calls for identifying specific burdens and bringing them before the Lord with clarity and intention. This practice can take shape through structured prayer, where concerns are named and consciously entrusted to God. It also involves returning to this act regularly, forming a habit of release that aligns with the rhythm of daily life. As burdens arise, the response

becomes consistent: placing them into God’s care rather than carrying them alone.

This practice extends into moments of pressure throughout the day. When anxiety begins to surface, the believer can pause and engage in brief, focused prayer, reaffirming trust in God’s sustaining presence. Over time, this repeated action shapes the heart’s reflex. Confidence in God grows as His sustaining work becomes evident. The promise of stability anchors the believer, allowing life to be lived with a steady awareness of God’s nearness and support.

Psalm 55:22 therefore moves from instruction to practice. It forms a pattern of living in which burdens are continually entrusted to the Lord. Through this pattern, the believer experiences the sustaining grace of God and rests on the assurance that life is held securely in His care.

Reflection Questions:

1. What specific burdens in your life align with the kinds of pressures described in Psalm 55?

2. How does the command to “cast” shape the way you approach God in prayer today?

3. What practical steps can you take to develop a consistent habit of entrusting your concerns to the Lord?

“Cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Psalm 55:22

Over the past several days, you have observed the meaning of the verse, explored its context, considered its theological depth, and applied its truth to your own life. Today is an opportunity to reinforce what you have learned so that this verse moves from familiarity into formation. The goal is not only to remember the words, but to allow them to shape your reflexes in moments of pressure. As you walk through these steps, engage slowly and intentionally, allowing God’s Word to settle deeply into your heart and mind.

Recite from Memory

Without looking at the text, say Psalm 55:22 aloud. Speak it slowly and clearly. If you need help, glance back and try again.

Write It Out

Write the verse by hand in a journal or on a notecard. As you write, pause after each phrase. Writing slows your thinking and strengthens retention.

Reflect

Take a few moments to consider how this verse has shaped your thinking this week. What burdens have you become more aware of? How has your understanding of prayer shifted? Where have you seen God sustain you, even in small ways?

Share It

Share this verse with someone this week—a friend, family member, or fellow believer. You can send a message, have a conversation, or write it in a note. Briefly explain what it has meant to you. Speaking truth to others reinforces it in your own heart and extends encouragement to someone else.

Final Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word that anchors my heart. You see every burden I carry, and You invite me to place them into Your hands. Continue to teach me to turn to You quickly in prayer. Use Your Word to shape my thoughts, guide my responses, and deepen my dependence on You. In Jesus' name, amen.

FAMILY SUMMER NIGHTS!

ONE AMAZING SUMMER!

FAMILY SKATE NIGHT



Wednesday,
June 24th
6:30PM

Kingsway Skateland



FAMILY NIGHT

Water Games &
Ice Cream Social



WATER GAMES
5:00PM-6:30PM



ICE CREAM SOCIAL
STARTS AT 6:30PM

Sunday, July 12th
Rec Field



FUN FOR
ALL AGES



BRING YOUR
FRIENDS



MAKE GREAT
MEMORIES



WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17–18

Interest in fasting has surged in recent years. Health researchers report that intermittent fasting has become one of the most widely practiced dietary strategies in the United States. Surveys have shown that millions of adults have experimented with some form of fasting for weight management, improved energy, metabolic health, or mental focus. Nutrition journals regularly publish studies examining fasting windows, calorie restrictions, and the physiological effects of abstaining from food. Social media platforms are filled with testimonies about reduced body fat, increased discipline, and improved physical performance through fasting practices.

The fascination with fasting reveals something important about human nature. People recognize that saying no to physical cravings can produce meaningful results. Discipline shapes the body, clarifies priorities, and strengthens resolve. Scripture acknowledges this reality while directing believers toward a great purpose. Fasting is not fundamentally about improving physical appearance or maximizing bodily performance. Fasting is a spiritual practice designed for spiritual formation. God’s people fast in order to seek Him with humility, dependence, repentance, and focused prayer.

Throughout church history, believers have understood fasting as an important spiritual discipline. Jesus assumed His followers would practice it. Matthew 6:17–18 records His instruction: “But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

What is fasting? Biblical fasting is abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. The goal of fasting is not self-punishment. The goal is greater attentiveness to God. Food is temporarily set aside so the heart may seek the Lord with intentional devotion. Hunger becomes a reminder

to pray, meditate on Scripture, confess sin, and pursue communion with God.

Scripture provides several examples of fasting. Moses participated in an absolute fast while receiving the Law from God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28). Esther called the Jewish people to fast as they sought God's deliverance during a national crisis (Esther 4:16). David fasted during seasons of grief and repentance (Psalm 35:13). Daniel practiced a selective fast by refusing certain foods in Babylon (Daniel 1:18–21). Jesus fasted in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:1–2). The early church fasted while seeking wisdom and direction from the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2–3).

The Bible describes several basic forms of fasting. An *absolute fast* involves abstaining from all food and liquids for a limited period of time. (Outside of a unique divine intervention, this kind of fast is generally discouraged for longer than 72 hours.) Moses experienced this kind of supernatural fast in Exodus 34:28. A *normal fast* involves abstaining from food while continuing to drink liquids. Jesus practiced this form of fasting during His forty days in the wilderness. A *selective fast* involves abstaining from certain foods and drinks while continuing to eat in a restricted way. Daniel's diet in Babylon provides the clearest example of this practice.

Jesus addressed fasting in the Sermon on the Mount because religious activity can become distorted by pride. Matthew 6 contains repeated warnings about practicing righteousness for public recognition. Jesus taught about giving, praying, and fasting because each discipline can become an opportunity for self-promotion.

The passage begins with the phrase, "But when you fast..." Jesus spoke of fasting as an expected practice among His disciples. He did not present fasting as an unusual discipline reserved for spiritual elites. Followers of Christ would engage in fasting as part of their devotion to God.

Jesus then instructed His listeners to "put oil on your head and wash your face." In the first century, mourning practices often included neglecting one's appearance. Some religious leaders intentionally looked exhausted and disheveled so others would notice their sacrifices. Jesus instructed His disciples to maintain ordinary grooming habits during a

fast. Their appearance should not become a public announcement of spiritual devotion.

The Lord continued, “so that your fasting isn’t obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret.” God values sincerity in worship. Spiritual disciplines are directed toward the Lord Himself. The Father sees hidden motives, private prayers, and quiet acts of obedience. Fasting invites believers into a deeper awareness of God’s presence rather than public admiration.

Jesus concludes with a promise: “And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” God responds to genuine devotion. The reward of fasting includes a deeper fellowship with the Lord, increased sensitivity to sin, strengthened dependence upon God, and renewed focus in prayer. Believers often discover clarity, conviction, wisdom, and spiritual endurance through seasons of fasting.

This passage speaks directly into modern Christian life. Many believers live in a culture shaped by constant consumption and immediate gratification. Fasting interrupts those patterns. It teaches Christians to say no to temporary desires in order to pursue eternal priorities. Hunger becomes a teacher that points the heart toward God.

Fasting reveals areas of dependence that often remain hidden beneath daily routines: Irritability, impatience, distraction, and anxiety frequently surface when comfort is removed. Those moments create opportunities for confession and surrender. God uses fasting to expose the condition of the heart and to cultivate spiritual freedom.

Memorization and Meditation

1. Read Matthew 6:17–18 aloud three times slowly.
2. Write the passage by hand in a journal or notebook. If this is your learning style, feel free to write it multiple times.
3. Underline the repeated references to “your Father.”
4. Circle every action word connected to fasting in the passage.

5. Develop a strategic schedule for memorizing the passage over the next four days.
6. Reflect on this question: What motives usually shape my spiritual disciplines?
7. Pray the Verse: Turn the verse into a prayer or use the following sample prayer.

Father, help me understand the value of fasting as a discipline of the faith. Help me to seek You with sincerity and humility. Guard my heart from pride and the desire for attention. Teach me to pursue Your presence in secret, trusting that You see, know, and faithfully reward Your children. In Jesus' name, amen.

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17–18

Matthew 6:17–18 appears within Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, one of the most significant teaching sections in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus delivered this message early in His public ministry while ministering in the region of Galilee. Matthew records that large crowds gathered around Him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (Matthew 4:25). Jesus then went up on a mountain, sat down as a teacher, and instructed His disciples while the crowds listened nearby (Matthew 5:1–2). The setting carried deep spiritual meaning. Mountains throughout Scripture often became places where God revealed truth, gave instruction, and called His people to obedience.

The audience included committed disciples as well as curious listeners who were learning about the kingdom of God. Many people in the crowd were familiar with the practices of Jewish religious life, including prayer, giving, and fasting. Religious leaders often emphasized outward acts of devotion. Jesus addressed these practices because He desired His followers to understand the true nature of righteousness before God.

Matthew 6 focuses heavily on the condition of the heart. Jesus taught that spiritual disciplines should flow from sincere devotion to the Father. He addressed giving to the need, prayer, and fasting because these practices were common expressions of worship among God’s people. In each section, Jesus guided His listeners away from performing spiritual acts for public recognition. He directed their attention toward the Father who sees what is hidden.

The location, audience, and theme work together to strengthen the meaning of Jesus’ words about fasting. Christ spoke to people living within a religious culture where public appearance carried social importance. Some individuals used visible acts of sacrifice to gain admiration from others. Jesus instructed His disciples to approach fasting

with humility, integrity, and quiet devotion. He wanted His followers to understand that God values inward sincerity above outward performance.

Jesus' instructions also reveal the personal nature of the believer's relationship with God. The repeated phrase "your Father" highlights intimacy, care, and fellowship. Fasting was intended to deepen dependence upon God and strengthen communion with Him. Christ taught His disciples to pursue the approval of the Father rather than the praise of people.

The Sermon on the Mount continually calls believers to a righteousness shaped by transformed hearts. Matthew 6:17–18 reminds Christians that spiritual disciplines are opportunities to seek God faithfully and wholeheartedly. The Lord's aim was to form disciples whose worship reflected genuine love for God from the inside out.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Matthew 6:1–18 to understand the broader context of Jesus' teaching on giving, prayer, and fasting. Then read Isaiah 58:1–12 and Joel 2:12–13 to see how God connects fasting with repentance, humility, and wholehearted devotion.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where did Jesus deliver the Sermon on the Mount, and why is that setting significant in Scripture?
2. What common spiritual practices did Jesus address in Matthew 6?
3. What did Jesus want His followers to understand about the purpose of fasting?

Memorization Reminder: Continue memorizing Matthew 6:17–18 by repeating the passage aloud several times today. Focus especially on the phrase, "your Father who sees in secret."

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17–18

Spiritual disciplines are intentional practices that help believers grow in their relationship with God. Scripture presents these disciplines as habits of devotion that shape the heart, direct the mind, and strengthen obedience. Christians throughout history have practiced prayer, Bible meditation, worship, fasting, confession, generosity, solitude, service, and fellowship as ways of pursuing communion with the Lord. These disciplines do not earn salvation or secure God’s love. Salvation comes through grace alone by faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). Spiritual disciplines function as means through which believers place themselves before God for spiritual growth and transformation.

The Christian life involves ongoing formation into the likeness of Christ. Romans 12:2 calls believers to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Spiritual disciplines support that transformation by training believers to seek God consistently and faithfully. Daily life often pulls the heart toward distraction, self-dependence, anxiety, and worldly priorities. Spiritual disciplines reorient the believer toward God’s truth, presence, and purposes.

Fasting occupies an important place among these disciplines because it engages both the body and the soul. Biblical fasting is abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. Hunger becomes a physical reminder of spiritual dependence upon God. Each desire for food points the believer toward prayer, Scripture, repentance, worship, and focused communion with the Lord.

Jesus practiced fasting during His earthly ministry (Matthew 4:1–2). The early church fasted while seeking wisdom and direction from God (Acts 13:2–3). Scripture repeatedly connects fasting with humility, repentance, grief over sin, earnest prayer, and spiritual preparation. Fasting trains believers to say no to temporary desires while cultivating deeper affection for God.

This discipline also exposes the true condition of the heart. Physical discomfort often reveals impatience, frustration, pride, distraction, or misplaced dependence upon comfort or routine. God uses fasting to uncover these spiritual struggles so believers may respond with confession and surrender. Fasting creates space for focused prayer and attentiveness to the Lord’s work within the soul.

The practice of fasting teaches dependence upon God’s sustaining power. Jesus declared, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Food sustains physical life, yet God Himself sustains spiritual life. Fasting reminds Christians that their deepest need is not physical satisfaction but fellowship with the living God.

Spiritual disciplines also cultivate endurance and consistency in the Christian life. Growth in holiness rarely develops through isolated moments of inspiration. God shapes believers through faithful patterns of obedience practiced over time. Fasting strengthens self-control, deepens prayer, sharpens spiritual focus, and increases awareness of God’s presence.

Matthew 6:17–18 teaches that fasting should flow from sincere devotion to the Father. Jesus instructed His followers to pursue hidden faithfulness rather than public recognition. The discipline of fasting trains believers to seek God Himself as the highest treasure of the Christian life. Through fasting, the Lord forms hearts that hunger for His presence above every earthly comfort.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are spiritual disciplines, and what role do they play in the Christian life?
2. How does fasting help reveal the condition of the heart?
3. According to the passage, what does fasting teach believers about dependence upon God?

Memorization Reminder: Repeat Matthew 6:17–18 aloud several times today. Try reciting the passage from memory during a quiet moment of prayer or before a meal.

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17–18

The inductive Bible study method helps believers move carefully through Scripture by asking three important questions: What does the passage say? What does the passage mean? How should this truth shape my life? Matthew 6:17–18 provides a clear opportunity to apply this process in a practical and personal way.

The passage says, “But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Jesus spoke these words during the Sermon on the Mount while teaching His disciples about authentic righteousness. The passage includes instructions about fasting, personal appearance, hidden devotion, and the Father’s reward.

The meaning of the passage centers on sincere worship. Jesus addressed the motives behind spiritual disciplines. Some religious individuals practiced fasting in visible ways that attracted public attention. Christ instructed His followers to approach fasting quietly and humbly. He directed believers toward private faithfulness before God. The repeated reference to “your Father” reveals the relational focus of the passage. Fasting creates an opportunity for deeper fellowship with God through prayer, dependence, confession, and worship.

Personal application begins by examining the heart honestly. Every believer must ask important questions about motivation and devotion. Why do I practice spiritual disciplines? Do I seek God’s presence with sincerity? Do I desire the approval of people? Jesus teaches that hidden faithfulness matters deeply to the Father.

This passage also calls believers to cultivate intentional dependence upon God. Fasting interrupts routine patterns of comfort and consumption. Hunger creates repeated opportunities for prayer and reflection. Each moment of physical weakness reminds the believer that

true strength comes from the Lord. Christians often discover that fasting reveals impatience, distraction, pride, or misplaced priorities that remain unnoticed during ordinary routines. God uses those discoveries to produce repentance and spiritual growth.

Matthew 6:17–18 also encourages believers who serve God faithfully without public recognition. The Father sees every quiet prayer, every hidden sacrifice, every act of obedience, and every sincere effort to seek Him. Christians live before the audience of One. God’s approval carries eternal value because He sees with perfect knowledge and responds with perfect wisdom.

Practical application may involve beginning a simple fast with clear spiritual purpose. A believer may choose to fast from one meal in order to devote focused time to prayer and Scripture reading. Another believer may practice a selective fast while seeking God’s direction in a particular situation. The goal remains the same: pursuing deeper communion with God through humble devotion.

The study of Matthew 6:17–18 invites Christians to move beyond information into obedience. Scripture calls believers to seek the Lord sincerely, trust the Father fully, and cultivate a heart that treasures God above every earthly comfort. Fasting becomes an act of worship that directs the soul toward deeper dependence upon Christ.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does Matthew 6:17–18 reveal about the motives behind spiritual disciplines?
2. How can fasting expose areas of spiritual weakness or misplaced priorities?
3. What practical step could help you pursue fasting with sincerity and focused devotion to God?

Memorization Reminder: Continue reviewing Matthew 6:17–18. Try reciting the entire passage from memory during prayer and focus on the promise that “your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17–18

This week focused on Jesus’ instruction about fasting in Matthew 6:17–18. We explored the meaning of biblical fasting, the context of Christ’s teaching, the function of spiritual disciplines in the Christian life, and the personal application of sincere devotion. The passage reminded believers that the Father sees hidden faithfulness and desires worship that flows from a humble and wholehearted heart.

Recite from Memory

Recite Matthew 6:17–18 aloud from memory. Speak the passage slowly and thoughtfully. Pay careful attention to the repeated references to “your Father” and reflect on the personal relationship believers have with God through Christ.

Write It Out

Write Matthew 6:17–18 by hand in a journal, notebook, or card. Writing the passage strengthens memory and encourages deeper meditation on the words of Jesus.

Reflect

Reflect on this week’s study. Consider how fasting can deepen your dependence upon God, strengthen your prayer life, and expose areas where spiritual growth is needed.

Share It

Share one truth you learned this week with a family member, friend, small group participant, or fellow believer.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for teaching me through Your Word this week. Create in me a sincere heart that seeks You with humility and faithfulness. Help me pursue spiritual disciplines for Your glory and deepen my dependence upon Christ each day. Teach me to treasure Your presence above every earthly comfort. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

In September 1857, a businessman named Jeremiah Lanphier walked the crowded streets of lower Manhattan with a burden on his heart. New York City was booming with commerce and ambition, yet spiritual concern seemed absent from daily life. Churches struggled; many people were consumed with wealth, politics, and survival. Lanphier was not a pastor with national influence or a gifted public speaker with a large following. He served as a quiet lay missionary from the North Dutch Church, visiting homes and inviting people to seek God.

Convinced that the greatest need of the city was prayer, Lanphier placed a simple advertisement in the newspaper announcing a weekly noonday prayer meeting at the Fulton Street Church. On Wednesday, September 23, 1857, he arrived and waited alone for nearly thirty minutes. Finally, one man climbed the stairs. Then another. By the end of the hour, six men had gathered to pray.

The following week, attendance grew to twenty. Soon the meetings moved from weekly gatherings to daily prayer meetings because so many people wanted to come. Businessmen paused their work at lunchtime to seek God together. Churches across the city opened their doors for prayer. Reports of changed lives spread throughout New York and then across the nation. Historians estimate that within two years, nearly one million people came to faith in Christ during what became known as the Fulton Street Prayer Revival or the Layman’s Prayer Revival.

What makes that story so compelling is its simplicity. There were no elaborate programs, celebrity personalities, or dramatic techniques. The movement began with ordinary believers who believed God hears prayer. Heaven responded as God’s people humbled themselves and sought Him together.

That longing still exists in the heart of every sincere Christian. Believers want their prayers to matter. They want to pray with confidence

rather than uncertainty. They desire more than routine words spoken out of habit. Deep within the soul is a longing to experience communion with God that is alive, effective, and spiritually powerful. James 5:16 speaks directly into that desire:

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

This verse appears in the closing section of James’ letter, where he addresses suffering, confession, healing, endurance, and prayer within the life of the church. James presents prayer as an essential practice for believers in every season of life. Whether facing hardship, sickness, temptation, or spiritual need, the people of God are called to pray.

The verse begins with the phrase, “the prayer.” James uses language that describes earnest and heartfelt petition. Biblical prayer is not mechanical repetition or detached religious activity. It is the sincere expression of dependence upon God. Prayer flows from faith that God is present, attentive, and willing to act according to His will. Scripture consistently portrays prayer as relational communication with the living God. Believers approach Him as children welcomed by a gracious Father.

James then speaks of “a righteous person.” This righteousness is grounded first in a right standing with God through Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1 teaches that believers are justified by faith and have peace with God through Christ. Because of the gospel, Christians can approach God confidently. Yet James also emphasizes a life shaped by obedience and holiness. The righteous person seeks to walk faithfully before God. This does not mean sinless perfection. Rather, it describes a life marked by repentance, humility, and growing conformity to Christ.

James continues by declaring that such prayer “has great power.” The language communicates effectiveness, strength, and active force. Prayer accomplishes something because God Himself works through it. Scripture repeatedly demonstrates this truth. Moses prayed, and God spared Israel from immediate judgment. Hannah prayed, and God answered her longing for a son. Elijah prayed, and rain ceased for years before returning at God’s command. The early church prayed fervently,

and Peter was delivered from prison. Again and again, God chose to accomplish His purposes through prayers of His people.

Finally, James adds the phrase, “as it is working.” Prayer is active because God is active. Even when believers cannot immediately see results, God is never indifferent to the cries of His people. Prayer often works beneath the surface before visible change appears. Hearts soften. Wisdom grows. Strength is supplied. Circumstances shift according to God’s timing and purposes. The believer prays with confidence because of God’s character.

The story of Jeremiah Lanphier beautifully reflects the truth James teaches. One ordinary man believed prayer mattered. Others joined him. God moved in extraordinary ways through simple dependence upon Him. That same invitation remains open today. God still hears. God still responds. God still works through praying people.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Read It Slowly:** Read the verse aloud at least three times.

2. **Write It Down:** Write the verse by hand in a journal or on paper.

3. **Reflect on the Meaning:**
 - What does this verse teach me about God’s response to prayer?

 - How does righteousness shape the way I approach God?

 - Where do I need greater confidence in prayer today?

4. Pray the Verse:

Father, teach me to pray with faith and dependence on You. Shape my heart in righteousness through Christ and remind me that You are always at work through the prayers of Your people. In Jesus’ name, amen.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

James 5:16 stands within the closing section of the Epistle of James, a letter devoted to practical Christian living and spiritual maturity. James wrote to Jewish believers scattered among the nations (James 1:1). Many of these Christians experienced hardship, economic struggle, persecution, conflict, and spiritual instability. Throughout the letter, James addressed the daily conduct of believers by calling them toward steadfast faith, obedient living, wise speech, humility, and wholehearted devotion to God.

The verse states, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16). The word “therefore” connects this verse directly to the instructions that precede it. James had just addressed suffering, cheerfulness, sickness, prayer, and the ministry of the elders within the church (James 5:13–16). The broader context emphasizes the importance of prayer during every season of life.

James guided believers toward active participation in the spiritual care of one another. The church was never intended to function as insulated individuals pursuing faith independently. James described a community marked by confession, prayer, restoration, and mutual support. Sin often damages fellowship, burdens the conscience, weakens spiritual vitality, and disrupts relationships within the body of Christ. James instructed believers to practice honest confession and faithful intercession because spiritual healing frequently develops within the context of Christian community.

The instruction to confess sins to one another highlights humility and repentance. James called believers to acknowledge sin openly rather than hiding spiritual struggles behind outward appearances. Confession creates opportunities for accountability, encouragement, reconciliation, and prayer. This instruction does not present public confession as a ritual

requirement for every sin. (NOTE: The scope of the sin dictates the scope of the confession.) James emphasized sincere honesty among believers who care for one another spiritually.

Prayer stands at the center of the passage. James repeatedly emphasized prayer throughout chapter five. Suffering believers should pray. Cheerful believers should sing praise. Sick believers should call for prayer. Sinning believers should seek prayer and restoration. Elijah then appears as an example of faithful and effective prayer in verses 17–18. James wanted the church to understand that God works powerfully through the prayers of faithful believers.

The phrase “the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” points toward the effectiveness of godly prayer. James did not describe righteousness as sinless perfection. He described the faithful life of believers who walk in repentance, obedience, and dependence upon God. Prayer carries spiritual power because God hears and responds to His people.

James situated this verse within his larger argument about authentic faith. Genuine faith expresses itself through action, humility, obedience, and loving concern for others. James 5:16 calls believers to cultivate honest relationships, committed prayer, and spiritual care within the church. The verse reminds Christians that God works through prayerful communities shaped by repentance and faithful devotion.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read James 5:13–20. Identify every reference to prayer, confession, restoration, and spiritual care. Notice how James connects personal faith with the life and ministry of the church community.

Reflection Questions:

1. What situations does James address in the broader passage surrounding James 5:16?
2. Why does James connect confession and prayer within the life of the church?
3. How does Elijah’s example strengthen James’ teaching about prayer?

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

Corporate prayer has always occupied a central place in the life of God’s people. Churches gather for prayer during worship services, prayer meetings, Bible studies, mission trips, leadership gatherings, and times of crisis. Christian families pray together around tables and hospital beds. Believers join in prayer before major decisions, during seasons of grief, and while celebrating God’s blessings. Throughout history, the people of God have sought the Lord together through united prayer because Scripture presents communal prayer as a normal expression of faithful worship and spiritual dependence.

The Bible repeatedly portrays prayer within the context of community. In the Old Testament, Israel gathered publicly for prayer during national assemblies, covenant renewals, worship services, and moments of repentance. Solomon led the nation in prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8). Jehoshaphat called the people together to seek the Lord during military danger (2 Chronicles 20:3–13). Ezra prayed publicly while the people confessed their sin before God (Ezra 9). These moments revealed that God’s people approached Him together with humility, repentance, thanksgiving, and dependence.

The New Testament continues this emphasis with even greater clarity. Jesus taught His disciples to pray using the language of shared dependence. “Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). The early church gathered regularly for united prayer after Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:14). Acts 2:42 identifies prayer as one of the foundational practices of the early Christian community. Believers prayed together for boldness during persecution (Acts 4:23–31). The church prayed for Peter while he was imprisoned (Acts 12:5). Paul frequently requested prayer from churches and assured believers of his prayers for them (Ephesians 6:18–20; Colossians 4:2–4).

Corporate prayer strengthens fellowship within the body of Christ. Believers encourage one another through shared burdens, mutual intercession, confession of sin, and united worship. Prayer draws Christians toward spiritual unity because it directs their attention toward the Lord and His purposes. Corporate prayer also teaches humility. Christians acknowledge their dependence upon God and recognize their need for one another within the church.

James 5:16 reflects this theological pattern clearly. James instructed believers to “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” His instruction assumes active spiritual relationships within the church community. Prayer was not isolated from the daily life of believers. Christians carried one another’s burdens before God faithfully and consistently.

The effectual nature of prayer in James’ letter rests upon God’s active involvement in the lives of His people. James described prayer as powerful because God hears righteous believers who seek Him sincerely. The surrounding verses emphasize suffering, sickness, confession, restoration, and spiritual care within the church. Corporate prayer became one of God’s appointed means for strengthening believers and sustaining the church during hardship.

James wanted Christians to understand that faithful prayer belongs at the center of Christian community. God works through praying churches, praying families, praying friendships, and praying believers who gather in humble dependence upon Him.

Reflection Questions:

1. What examples of corporate prayer appear throughout Scripture according to the entry above?
2. How does corporate prayer strengthen fellowship and unity within the church?
3. Why does James connect confession, prayer, and spiritual care within the Christian community?

Memorization Reminder: Write James 5:16 on an index card or sticky note and place it somewhere you will see it throughout the day. Each time you notice it, recite one phrase from memory until you can confidently speak the entire verse aloud.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

The inductive Bible study method helps believers approach Scripture carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully. This method asks three foundational questions: what does the passage say? What does the passage mean? How should this truth shape my life? James 5:16 provides a rich opportunity to practice this process while applying God’s Word personally and faithfully. The verse states, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16). Observation begins by identifying the major actions and themes within the text. James commands believers to confess sins, pray for one another, and pursue healing within the context of Christian community. The verse also emphasizes the effectiveness and power of prayer. Repeated references to “one another” reveal the communal nature of the instruction. James addressed believers living within the life of the church rather than isolated individuals practicing faith privately.

Interpretation asks what the passage means within its context. James wrote to Christians facing suffering, hardship, conflict, and spiritual struggle. Throughout chapter five, he repeatedly directed believers toward prayer during every season of life. The surrounding verses mention suffering, sickness, praise, confession, restoration, and spiritual care. James taught that faithful Christian community involves honesty, humility, intercession, and dependence upon God.

Confession plays an important role in spiritual health. Sin often creates distance in relationships, weakens fellowship, and burdens the conscience. James instructed believers to practice humble honesty with trusted fellow Christians who would respond with prayer and spiritual encouragement. Prayer becomes one of God’s means of strengthening believers and sustaining the church.

Application moves the truth of Scripture into daily life. James 5:16 challenges believers to examine the depth of their spiritual relationships. Many Christians carry burdens silently while avoiding vulnerability and accountability. This passage calls believers toward honest fellowship shaped by grace and truth. Christians need trusted relationships where confession, encouragement, prayer, and spiritual care can flourish.

The verse also challenges believers to cultivate a faithful prayer life for others. Prayer involves active participation in the needs of fellow believers. Intercession requires compassion, consistency, and spiritual attentiveness. James reminds the church that prayer possesses real spiritual power because God hears and responds to His people.

Personal application may involve seeking reconciliation where sin has damaged relationships, it may involve asking a mature believer for prayer and accountability. It may involve dedicating intentional time each day to pray for members of the church family. James calls believers to live within a spiritually engaged community where prayer and confession strengthen the body of Christ.

The final statement of the verse provides encouragement for every believer: “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” God works through praying Christians who walk in repentance, faith, and obedience. James invites believers to trust God’s power and participate faithfully in the spiritual care of one another.

Reflection Questions:

1. What actions does James command believers to practice in James 5:16?
2. How does confession strengthen relationships and spiritual health within the church?
3. What practical step could help you grow in praying faithfully for other believers?

Memorization Reminder: Recite James 5:16 while walking, driving, or preparing for the day. Attach each phrase of the verse to a simple hand motion or pause to help strengthen your memory and deepen meditation on the passage.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

This week focused on James 5:16 and the role of confession, prayer, and spiritual care within the Christian community. You explored the context of James’ teaching, the theological importance of corporate prayer, and the personal application of faithful intercession, honest relationships, and dependence upon God through prayer.

Recite It

Recite James 5:16 aloud from memory several times today. Speak the verse slowly and thoughtfully, paying close attention to the commands to confess and pray for one another.

Write It Without Looking

Write James 5:16 from memory in a journal or notebook without looking at the verse. Afterward, check your accuracy and repeat sections that need further practice.

Reflect on Your Week

Reflect on how this week’s study challenged your understanding of prayer, confession, and Christian community. Consider whether God revealed any areas where you need greater openness, accountability, or consistency in praying for others.

Share It

Share James 5:16 or one lesson from this week with another believer. Encourage someone through prayer, a conversation, or a message that points them toward the power and importance of faithful prayer.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for teaching me through Your Word this week. Help me grow in humility, honesty, and faithfulness in prayer. Strengthen my relationships within the church and teach me to care for others with compassion and sincerity. Fill my heart with confidence that You hear and answer the prayers of Your people according to Your wisdom and grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAILY PODCAST

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE

Monday - Thursday

Hear the daily devotions and reflection questions.

Friday

Join Bro. Scott for practical insights, spiritual encouragement, and Biblical truth for everyday life.



AI Ethical Guidelines¹

As emerging technologies like AI find their way into the realm of ministry and theological writing, I've developed personal guidelines to preserve the integrity of this devotional work:

- 1 Avoid plagiarism and ensure authenticity: AI tools are helpful for idea generation, word choice, and structural planning, but I avoid copying AI-generated content verbatim. The goal is not expediency but authenticity. My personal study, meditation, and prayer are indispensable to every page written.
- 2 Maintain human oversight and moral responsibility: AI lacks moral agency and theological conviction. Human discernment is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness, tone, and truthfulness of all content.
- 3 Use AI to enhance, not replace, human creativity: AI serves as a helpful assistant but never replaces the divine inspiration that flows from prayerful engagement with the text. The Holy Spirit—not a machine—is the true illumination of Scripture.

These guidelines ensure that *Shaped by Scripture* is not only a tool of spiritual formation but also a product of integrity and pastoral care.

¹ I have chosen to include this disclosure and set self-imposed guidelines because the use of AI in writing and research remains a point of ethical concern and public skepticism. In the interest of transparency and pastoral integrity, I believe it is important to clarify how these tools were used in a supportive— not substitutive— role in the development of this work.



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