

A person wearing a bright yellow raincoat is walking away from the camera down a dirt path in a dense, misty forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves, and the trees are tall and thin, with their branches reaching up into a hazy sky. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

# ONE: in the be*loved*

21 Days of Prayer and Fasting

BY JENNI GILBERT

 PENTECOSTAL  
CHURCH OF GOD



# ONE: in the be*loved*

## 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting

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## 2019 21-DAY PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

**Welcome** to our PCG Prayer Resource—"Twenty-One Days of Prayer and Fasting." In the Pentecostal Church of God, we are committed to cultivating a culture of seeking the Lord. With intentionality, the purpose of this resource involves inviting and inspiring every Christ-follower possible to engage in prayer and fasting.

As the Beloved, Father God invites us into a personal relationship with Him and one another. Jesus prayed in John 17:21, "I pray that they (my disciples) will all be ONE, just as you and I are ONE—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you." What an amazing invitation to experience community with God and others.

During this 21-one days of prayer and fasting, you will receive the opportunity to consecrate yourself through applying what you have learned with a...

- Prayer Focus – Praying in agreement as ONE
- Fasting Focus – Fasting in agreement as ONE

We are quickly approaching the beginning of a brand new chapter in a 2nd-Century PCG, and we have chosen this season of prayer and fasting for two reasons:

- (1) To accelerate our spiritual pace, leading to Pentecost Sunday; and
- (2) To prepare the way for God moments at our Centennial Celebration.

Will you join with me as "One in the Beloved?" Will you help me prepare the way of the Lord through the Spirit? If so, Pentecost Sunday and our Centennial Celebration promise to be transformative moments for each one of us and our missional movement.

Allow me to express my deep appreciation to Jenni Gilbert, who is the author and writer of this amazing resource. I can attest to the fact that she remains fixed to an all-out pursuit of knowing and sharing the Beloved's heart. If you are genuinely compelled to engage in this season of prayer and fasting, you will certainly value God's gift to the Kingdom and the PCG—Jenni Gilbert.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayman C. Ming, Jr.".

Dr. Wayman C. Ming, Jr.  
General Bishop  
Pentecostal Church of God



# Welcome

Thank you for joining with the Pentecostal Church of God and Empowered Women's Ministries as we begin our 21 day journey of prayer and fasting together. We join our hearts with you in unity as *ONE- In The Beloved.*

-Kimberly Ming, Director, Empowered Women's Ministries



“

I pray that they will all be ONE, just as you and I are ONE—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be ONE as we are ONE. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

John 17:20-23



# Day 1

## The Invitation of the Beloved: Becoming One in Loving Relationship

We find the birthplace of the PCG located in a room in Acts 2:1 where the disciples were gathered together in one place. The previous chapter explains that such gatherings had been going on since Jesus' departure. And those gathered are described as being "with one mind . . . continually devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14).

Something was going on here! There was some kind of ONE-ness happening that was driving the disciples to deep commitment in gathering with each other and engaging with God. This ONE-ness is a continual thread woven through the events of Acts as the disciples do life together (e.g., Acts 2:46; 4:24; 15:25). Translations phrase this ONE-ness as having "one mind" (NASB) or being "in one accord" (KJV). The Greek word used is *homothumadon* which combines two words: *homo*, meaning "same" and *thymos*, meaning "passion."

*What was this passion all about? Where did it come from? How does it relate to us?*

The one instance where *homothumadon* is used outside of Acts gives us great insight. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he urges believers to "be in agreement with one another, in *accordance with Christ Jesus* so that with ONE mind (*homothumadon*) you may glorify with one mouth the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:5-6, LEB). ONE-ness stems from a Jesus-style of relating to each other which then points to the Father!

So what is this Jesus-style of relating to each other? We find the answer in Jesus' prayer for believers found in John 17:20-23:

"I pray that they will all be ONE, just as you and I are ONE—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be ONE as we are ONE. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."

This is JESUS praying, so it's gotta be right on, right?

Jesus points to the relationship He shares with the Father to illustrate ONE-ness, further specifying that they are "in" each other. His desire is for believers to also be found "in" them.

Unity means participation in the relationship of the Father and Son. Such unity then demonstrates to the world who Jesus is and invites them into this relationship where all will experience the SAME love the Father has for the Son! *The relationship of the Beloved.*

Wow.

*Participation in the love relationship of the Father and Son. Participation in the Beloved.*

**ONE-ness.**

## Application

Over the next 21 days, we will be exploring further what it might look like to participate in the relationship of love shared by the Father and Son. Our hope is that our time together would move us beyond intellectual understanding of this relationship into an experience of relationship that radically transforms the way we do life.

## Fasting Focus

*What response does this evoke in you as you look toward the next 21 days of prayer and fasting?  
What are some specific hopes and desires you are eager to have met in your relationship with God?*

## Prayer Focus

Pray for PCG Global Missions to advance around the world.

# Day 2

## Creating Space to Experience the Beloved: One in Preparing the Way for Relationship: Part One

In the third chapter of Matthew, John the Baptist enters the scene as one who is preparing the way for Jesus. Matthew points to the significance of his preparation by connecting it with a quote from Isaiah: "A voice is calling in the wilderness, 'Clear the way of Yahweh! Make a highway smooth in the desert for our God!'" (Mt. 3:3) Like Isaiah's call to ready the exiles in Babylon for Yahweh's restoration of Judah, John is getting everyone set for God's restoration of all humanity in Jesus.

You can almost feel the anticipation mounting in Matthew's narrative. Do you wonder how John was able to sleep at night while pondering the possibility that tomorrow might be the big day?

In the act of preparation, we turn our thoughts and feelings towards whom or what we are preparing for. As a result, we might be filled with apprehension or eagerness.

*How do you feel as you approach this season of experiencing relationship in the Beloved? What does it look like to prepare the way for your experience?*

More than anything, preparation involves creating space—making room. Our goal is to do everything possible to enable an inward attitude of openness and then responsiveness.

There are two key ways we can encourage this attitude throughout the days ahead. Though it may strike fear in some hearts, today we will talk about fasting.

Fasting is letting go of something in your life in order for increased dependence upon God. When Jesus was with the disciples, He told them they had no need to fast because they were experiencing life with Him on a daily basis. However, He encouraged them to fast once again after His departure. He knew they would need a tangible way to remember that He continued to be present with and for them.

We see Jesus Himself actively letting go in order to depend on His Father. "We often think of Jesus' fast beginning when He stepped into the Judean wilderness. But the fast actually began three decades earlier when the Glory of heaven was wrapped in plain paper and given as a gift to mankind. . . . Jesus fasted omnipresence and clothed Himself with flesh. He fasted being worshiped by angels and accepted the disregard of man. . . . we are duly thankful, challenged and inspired by Jesus' forty-day fast from food in the Judean wilderness. Perhaps we should likewise be grateful, awed, and humbled by His thirty-year fast from praise, power and potential in Nazareth."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alicia Britt Chole, *40 Days of Decrease* (Tennessee, W Publishing Group, 2016) xv.



## Application

Jesus' example shows us that fasting is an intentional way of encouraging a deeper inward dependence on the Beloved. In letting go, it is as if the cover has been taken off of something hidden within, a need now exposed. Often, you find this need was previously met by the very thing of which you've let go. Now exposed, you must turn with your need to the Beloved and allow Him to meet you.

## Fasting Focus

The most common forms of fasting include eliminating certain foods or activities such as watching tv or interacting with social media. Other possibilities might involve fasting focused on breaking ungodly habits like complaining or gossiping or attitudes such as comparison or discontent. (Obviously, these aren't habits you take back up again once the fast is over!) There will be a suggested Fasting Focus for each day that you might consider along with your specific fast. Whatever you end up choosing, the important thing is that you are listening closer to the longing that arises and turn to the Beloved for an answer.

*What might God be prompting you to fast in these next few weeks?*

## Prayer Focus

Pray for U.S. National Missions to win the lost and equip/send the found.

# Day 3

## Creating Space to Experience the Beloved: One in Preparing the Way for Relationship: Part Two

The second way we can prepare to experience relationship in the Beloved is through solitude.

Solitude is similar to fasting in the act of letting go to increase dependence. Our goal in solitude is to give our full attention to the still small voice of the Beloved. This can be extremely difficult today in our culture of accessibility, and it can challenge our ideas of productivity.

This is because solitude is a place set apart in both a physical and internal sense. It is physical in the sense that it is “a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone, a time when we unplug and withdraw from the noise of interpersonal interactions, from the noise, busyness and constant stimulation associated with life in the company of others . . . a place that is not cluttered with work, noise, technology, other relationships, or any of those things that call us back into doing mode.”<sup>2</sup>

Withdrawing in this way gives us the freedom to focus in the present moment. However, letting go of the noise of our culture can be a scary thing for some people because it exposes the internal noise of our soul. One philosopher observed, “in solitude everyone has to face himself.”<sup>3</sup> Being alone lays bare the soul which has been busy pushing things aside and covering things up to get on with the pace of life’s demands. Yet, no soul is truly alone in the presence of the Beloved. We can bravely embrace times of solitude because we are sure that the Beloved is right there with us.

Solitude and stillness go hand in hand. External stillness doesn’t necessarily correlate to internal stillness and the degree of external stillness you need may be different from what someone else needs. Introverts are more sensitive to external stimulation so if you are an introvert, you might consider removing external noise more completely. Even in quiet settings, you may find the need to close your eyes to help direct your thoughts inward.

On the other hand, extroverts aren’t as sensitive to external stimulation so you may be able to tolerate more external noise while moving towards internal stillness. However, you might find yourself limited in freely expressing yourself in a more public place, and our interaction with the Beloved in solitude is of a private and personal nature. Jesus regularly withdrew from the crowds and even the disciples to be in solitude with His Father (Lk. 5:16).

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* (Illinois, IVP, 2006) 32.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, [www.statusmind.com/sad-and-loneliness-quotes-28](http://www.statusmind.com/sad-and-loneliness-quotes-28).



What does it look like for you to “withdraw” in this season to seek solitude with the Beloved? Henri Nouwen offered this suggestion: “Five or ten minutes a day may be all we can tolerate. Perhaps we are ready for an hour every day, an afternoon every week, a day every month, or a week every year. The amount of time will vary for each person according to temperament, age, job, lifestyle and maturity. But we do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to Him. We may have to write it in black and white in our daily calendar so that nobody else can take away this period of time. Then we will be able to say to our friends, neighbors, students, customers, clients, or patients, “I’m sorry, but I’ve already made an appointment at that time and it can’t be changed.”<sup>4</sup>

## Application

Set aside some time for solitude with the Beloved today. Try to make it a time when you have a good amount of energy. Choose a location that makes you feel relaxed and happy. Leave your cellphone behind and remove yourself from anything that might interrupt or distract you from focusing attention on listening for His voice. Settle into a comfortable chair or position, close your eyes, and take some deep breaths. Whisper a simple phrase like “Come, Lord Jesus.” Spend a couple of minutes like this just enjoying His Presence.<sup>5</sup>

## Fasting Focus: External Noise

What might you give up today that will help you hear the still small voice of the Beloved? Attempt to silence the external noise in your life by choosing at least one thing to “turn off.” Maybe it’s leaving your cell phone in silent mode for several hours or turning the tv off for the whole night. Whatever you choose, try to listen to what arises within you. Maybe the Beloved has something He wants to say.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for American Indian Missions to win the lost.

<sup>4</sup> Henri J. Nouwen, *Bringing Solitude into Our Lives*, [renovare.org/articles/bringing-solitude-into-our-lives](http://renovare.org/articles/bringing-solitude-into-our-lives).

<sup>5</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 43

# Day 4

## Strengthening Your Inner Ear with the Beloved: One in Surrendered Listening

How many times have you heard someone say, “Just take a deep breath”? Usually this is said within the context of overwhelming emotions and thoughts brought on by various circumstances. In solitude, we encourage ourselves to take those deep breaths that quiet our souls to listen. Solitude makes stillness possible.

Quieting ourselves for stillness is an act of surrender. It is a willingness to set aside our agenda and allow the Beloved to lead us into relationship in the way He wants to. In settling into quietness, we keep pushing away all of the things that clamor for our attention. We deny power to the all too familiar pull to take control and lead ourselves somewhere instead of being led.

But how do we do this? Sometimes it can feel as if the universe is conspiring against us to keep us from such a place of stillness! “One of the early Christian writers describes the first stage of solitary prayer as the experience of a man who, after years of living with open doors, suddenly decides to shut them. The visitors who used to come and enter his home start pounding on his doors, wondering why they are not allowed to enter. Only when they realize that they are not welcome do they gradually stop coming.”

Take heart and know that with time, the process will become easier. For now, two steps might be helpful. The first is to choose a word or phrase that expresses the intimacy of your relationship with the Beloved. These might include *Jesus, Abba, Peace* or a phrase like *Abba, I belong to You* or *Help me to live in Your presence*. Then, whenever distractions come, simply picture shutting a door, closing out that distraction. Return to that word or phrase and, without moving your lips, repeat it until you find yourself settled once more.

You also might find it helpful to engage your mind’s “eye” by picturing yourself with Jesus. One idea might be to take the position of the Beloved disciple who reclined with his head on Jesus’ chest in John 13:23. The Greek word for chest used in this scripture is *kolpos*, often translated as “bosom.” There is rich significance found in the use of this same word to describe the relationship between the Father and Son in John 1:18: “No one has seen God at any time; the one and only, God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father—that one has made him known.” Jesus is able to make the Father known because of His intimate relationship with the Father.

What tenderness is expressed of your close relationship with the Beloved as you picture resting your head on Jesus’ chest and listen for His heartbeat!



From this place of stillness, we learn to be with the Beloved. This is not intended to sound weird or mystical. Rather, it is like the comfortable silence that settles down in a deeply satisfying way when you're with someone who really knows you. You don't have to work to keep conversation going. You just enjoy the act of "being" with each other.

## Application

Spend a few minutes in stillness today as you sit in solitude with the Beloved. Follow the suggestions above to focus on being with Him. After you have spent a few minutes enjoying His presence, open your soul to Him by asking yourself these questions: *"Is there a particular joy you are celebrating? A loss you are grieving? Are there tears that have been waiting to be shed? A question that is stirring? An emotion that needs expression?"*<sup>8</sup> Let Him meet you in that place.

When your time is done, don't evaluate whether it was a "life changing experience" or rate the productivity of the time. Not once do we hear Jesus' come running back to His disciples exclaiming about what a great time He had with His Father. It was enough that He had been with Him in solitude. You can rest in that same knowledge.

## Fasting Focus: Internal Noise

Try not to evaluate or analyze the time you spend or the work you do today. Instead, entrust productivity to the Beloved. At the end of the day, express this trust in Him by telling Him you know He worked in and through you and thank Him for doing so.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Student Ministries (children, youth, young adult) to impact the nations.

<sup>8</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 43.

# Day 5

## Opening to the Word of the Beloved: One in Nurturing Our Reality

So far we have considered a few ways to encourage attentiveness to the Beloved in our times of solitude. Meditation is one more way we encourage our souls to open up to the reality of His presence.

Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1 describe meditation with the Hebrew word “*hagah*,” which means both to “mutter, utter,” and to “meditate, muse [ponder, consider at length], imagine, devise [picture in the mind]”.<sup>9</sup> In Joshua 1:8, Yahweh commands Joshua not to let the law “depart” from his mouth but to meditate (*hagah*) on it day and night so that it becomes incarnated in his lifestyle. Can’t you just picture Joshua walking around the campground all day mulling over the Scriptures, his lips moving silently, his brows knit together? Or sitting outside his tent waving his arms in animated discussions with his friends? Or lying awake at night reflecting on the days considerations and pondering their meaning?

Yahweh assures Joshua that this meditative lifestyle will cause him to flourish. Psalm 1 paints the scenery of such a promise with a tree thriving beside streams of water. *What might it look like to approach the Word in this way?*

First of all, we need to understand that meditation differs from other ways of interacting with Scripture in pace and purpose. It is done slowly with our inner ear leaning close to hear the Beloved speak to us in the present moment. One might describe it as an intimate conversation with the Beloved which keeps “our prayer rooted in the word and our reading of the word prayerful.”<sup>10</sup> Another way of looking at it might be the “difference between reading a newspaper or textbook and reading a love letter” in that it moves us from information gathering to experiencing loving relationship.<sup>11</sup>

*How can we do this?*

We’ve already talked about how stillness shifts the posture of our soul to the inward listening for the voice of the Beloved. This is the first step in meditation. Once we feel settled, we might choose a short scripture passage (i.e., 6-8 verses). Reading the passage once aloud engages our senses.

As we read the passage through a second time, we might ask the Holy Spirit to highlight a word, a phrase or a verse. We may look up unfamiliar words or phrases or read a footnote about cultural background, but any gathering of information stays intent on listening for where the Spirit wants us to linger.

<sup>9</sup>F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1951) 211.

<sup>10</sup>M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey* (Illinois, IVP, 2016).

<sup>11</sup>Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 48.



In our third reading of the passage, we hold the word, phrase, or verse at the forefront of our thoughts and consider reflections such as: If the passage is a story, we might picture ourselves within it: *where am I in this story and what do I experience in it? How do I feel about what is being said—where do I resonate and where do I resist? Why might this be and what does this say about my attitudes, relating patterns, perspectives, and behaviors?*<sup>12</sup>

After pondering these questions, we respond to what we've heard the Beloved say. We just talk to Him.

Finally, we return to our place of stillness and rest, confident that the Spirit is at work. We resolve to hold this word with us throughout our day, continuing to listen to it and being led further in allowing it to change the way we live each day.

## Application

This is just one way to encourage a meditative approach to the Word. Perhaps you know a different way that works best for you. No matter what, the goal is to nurture the reality of being in the Beloved through an attentive posture of listening for His voice. We will talk more about this posture tomorrow.

Choose a passage to meditate on today and follow the suggestions above. You might try Psalm 1 or John 12:1-8. Take your time and enjoy your interaction with the Beloved.

## Fasting Focus: Verbal Communication

Try to resist responding to people today solely on the basis of what they communicate verbally. Listen for what they aren't saying by watching their body language, hearing the tone of their voice, and noticing their facial expression. Respond to what you see and hear with gentleness and understanding.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Women's Ministries to empower and equip women around the world.

# Day 6

## Living from Our Relationship in the Beloved: One as the Beloved

Life in the Beloved means living in the environment of relationship with the Beloved. It is living in the presence of the Beloved and living from the presence of the Beloved. Our ever-increasing awareness of this environment molds and shapes our interactions—both with the Beloved Himself and with those whom He calls Beloved.

Becoming more aware of this environment enables us to live more fully in and from it, but growing in our awareness is the process of a lifetime. Fasting, solitude, stillness, and meditation are a few ways we can encourage this process in our daily lives. Now that we have a framework to cultivate our awareness, we are going to explore further what it looks like to live in and from the presence of the Beloved. We will alternate the focus of each day: One day's focus will revolve around what it looks like to live in His presence with the following day consisting of applying those insights to living from His presence.

Let's apply what we've already discussed about living *in* the Beloved to what this might mean for us as we seek to live *from* the Beloved.

On Day One, we recognized that the invitation of the Beloved is essentially relational. Oneness is participation in the relationship shared by the Father and Son, a relationship rooted in and expressed by love. Living from our location within the environment of this relationship motivates us to stretch the arms of our hearts out to invite others to set up residence in the same location. We do this by being intentional in mindset and actions that build relationship with others. With inviting hearts, we become like "letters of Christ . . . inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God" (2 Cor. 3:3, LEB).

On Days Two and Three, we talked about how preparing turns our hearts towards something by making room for it. Fasting and Solitude help us create the space to experience relationship with the Beloved. How does this apply to preparing for loving relationship with others? In the Beloved, we learn to be intentional in investing time and energy in building relationship. We learn to depend on the Spirit to help us replace any attitudes and behaviors that get in the way of experiencing loving relationship with others.

By strengthening our inner ear (Day Four) in the Beloved, our listening skills become honed and ready to truly hear others. We surrender our agenda in conversations to be attentive to where a person is instead of thinking ahead to what we are going to say. We determine to hear what's behind what's being said—listening for the beat of the Beloved's heart where He is moving in them, alert to the signs of life showing where He is at work.

In every relationship, we remain open to the Word that nurtures our reality (Day Five). First John 4:16 tells us that God not only loves but *is*, in fact, love. This means that God both expresses love and defines love. We can only know what love is as we know God. A primary way we know Him is by experiencing Him throughout the pages that chronicle the history of His loving relationship with people. Everything we (as individuals) or we (as a culture) tell ourselves about what love looks like must be held up to the light of what *His* love looks like and the ways *He* defines it. This alone must form our reality and be the compass point from which we get our bearings on various relational issues in our world.

## Application

During your time of solitude today, you might choose to settle your spirit with the phrase "You are Love," "God of Love," or "My Beloved." Follow the steps from Days 4 and 5 and meditate on 1 John 4:7-12.

## Fasting Focus: Isolation

What are some of the ways you might resist or withdraw from relationship with others? Is it hard for you to accept that you might need others in your life? Acknowledge your need for relationship today by noticing the people in your life, considering how they meet even the most basic needs (e.g., a grocery store checker, a bank teller). Think of ways you can express that you need them (e.g., a smile, a thank you). Choose at least one person outside of your immediate family to reach out to and let them know how you need him/her in your life.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Men's Ministries to raise the standard for men around the world.



# Day 7

## Belonging to the Beloved: One in Engaging as Family

If you've ever held a puzzle piece in hand, you've experienced the driving pursuit to find the exact place that piece fits within the whole. In the beginning, with barely a border formed, you may struggle to join a piece to various spots that don't work. It can get frustrating! There is such satisfaction when you finally reach the point where you press that last piece into the awaiting empty space and . . . *ahhhh* . . . it locks into place. The perfect fit. It's where it belongs.

Experts tell us that everyone is born with a need to connect relationally. We all have an inherent drive to **belong**. Four questions express this need and how we are able to answer them impacts the beliefs we form about ourselves and others:

- Are you there for me? Can I count on you?
- Do you really care about me?
- Am I worthy of your love and protection?
- What do I have to do to get your attention, your affection, your heart?

From birth, we seek answers to these questions within the context of family. Isn't it deeply significant then that Scripture refers to family as the very context we are brought into as believers? The weight of this fact is expressed in John's exclamation in 1 John 3:1: "See what sort of love the father has given to us: that we should be called children of God, and we are!" The Greek word for "see" used here can also be phrased as "pay attention to." John seems to urge his readers to recognize that this is no small matter!

John connects our identity as children of God with "those who love" in 1 John 4:7. The LEB translation describes these lovers as "fathered by God" which evokes such a sense of tenderness in the Father's active engagement in caring for us. John goes on to stress that it was purely God's initiative to "father" us with His love. This love initiative began before the foundation of the world when we were chosen "in" Christ (Eph. 1:4). One might say that, just like that empty spot awaiting the last puzzle piece, our place in the family of God has been waiting for us. That's where we fit. That's where we belong.

Being located within this family environment and "Fathered" by God makes it possible for our deepest needs of belonging to be fully met. He won't ever leave us (Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5), has placed His Spirit inside of us as a guarantee (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:22), loves us at all costs (Jn. 3:16), and has permanently anchored us in this love (Rom. 8:38-39) where He provides us with everything we need (Mt. 6:25-34; 2 Pt. 1:3).

*We can count on His being there for us and can be certain He really cares about us. Our worth was decided before our earthly parents ever clapped over our first word or marveled at our tiny hands. Our Father gave us His attention and affection before we ever did a thing.*

He answers each question of need.

### **You belong.**

Do you have a special seat at your family dinner table? Know that you do at the table of the Beloved.

## *Application*

In your time of solitude today, you might picture yourself at His family table and ask Him to show you your seat. If you find yourself standing in the doorway, hesitant to come in, as love's Initiator, He will jump up to come take you by the hand and lead you to a place right next to Him. You may find it helpful to use the name "Loving Father," "Abba Father," or the phrase "I belong to You" as you quiet your soul. Spend a few minutes enjoying your place of belonging before meditating on 1 John 4:7-14.

## *Fasting Focus:* Fitting In


What are some ways you try to "fit in" to the world around you? Be especially aware of the ways you relate to others, what you say, the things you wear, and the groups and activities you participate in. You may want to choose something from one of these areas to give up for the day. When you notice yourself scrambling to find your place in conversations or in the ways you act, remind yourself that you belong to the Beloved.

## *Prayer Focus*

Pray for PCG Chaplains & Leaders to win the lost and comfort the hurting.





A wooden crosspost, likely from a crucifix, is visible on the left side of the image. It is made of weathered wood and points to the right. The background is a soft-focus image of a cloudy sky. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box covers the right two-thirds of the image, serving as a background for the text.

“When Christ stands on the  
mountain revealed in his  
glory, the voice of the Father  
speaks from heaven, “This is  
my Son, the BELOVED; with  
Him I am well pleased.”

— *Matthew 17:5*

# Day 8

## Belonging as the Beloved: One in Engaging as Family

Remembering meals shared around a table of friends and family evokes warm feelings and a sense of close relationship. Such meals are few and far between in our culture of fast food and busyness, but in the New Testament times, they were more the norm. Who you ate with made a big statement about who you wanted to be identified with and how you marked yourself off from one another.<sup>14</sup> The Pharisees, for example, used the table as a place to set themselves apart as God's chosen ones "called to be holy in a world that was constantly threatened by defiling impurity."<sup>15</sup> Contact with "sinners" was one source of contamination and prompted the big complaint they lodged against Jesus when he shared a meal with "tax collectors and sinners" in Luke 15.

Jesus' action, along with His response to the Pharisees, gives rich insight for our consideration of family and identification of who belongs. He tells the Pharisees three parables, each one focused on something or someone that is lost. There is then a search and a consequent celebration or rejoicing upon the lost one's repentance (the prodigal son) and return.

*What was Jesus saying and how does it apply to being one as the Beloved?* First of all, the very fact that Jesus shared meals with those considered outsiders at best or the most depraved at worst tangibly demonstrates that He offered loving relationship to everyone equally. Many of these relationships were a result of His initiative, paralleling the initiative taken to search for the lost in the parables He told. *How are we doing at initiating relationship with those we may think we share little in common with?*

Ephesians 3:15 pinpoints the real location for our common ground: "I bend my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." All humanity originates from the Father. Therefore, we are all family. One-ness must flow from this commonality first and demolish any hint of partiality based on race, gender, status, education, or age.

As the Beloved, the Fatherhood of God is the foundation that determines our responsibility to others. The "Fathering" we receive in the Beloved drives our commitment to truly value and care for every individual we meet. In light of the significant role family plays in impacting a person's sense of identity and belonging, we must also commit ourselves to the restoration, nurturing, and equipping of families. Doing this will go a long way toward meeting the confusion and insecurity so many people experience today.

Secondly, Jesus' inclusion of "sinners" in the intimate table setting shows that He was not

<sup>14</sup> Stephen C. Barton, *Parables on God's Love and Forgiveness* (Luke 15:1-32) (Michigan, Eerdmans, 2000) 202.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

concerned about His purity being defiled. Rather, His behavior illustrates the belief that His holiness was “contagious,” that His purity could “rub off on them” so that they might “heed his calls to discipleship.”<sup>16</sup> *Are we being intentional to build the kind of relationships with the lost that give opportunity for the purity of the Beloved to “rub off” so that they are drawn to follow Him?*

## Application

In your time of solitude today, consider going back to the imagery of the Beloved’s table from yesterday. You might picture someone in your life who fits into the Pharisees’ description and bring them to the table with you. Spend a few minutes sitting with the Beloved together. Ask the Beloved to draw this person to Himself and use you as a messenger of His love. Follow the steps to meditate on *Luke 15:11-24*.

## Fasting Focus: Comfort

Smile at someone you don’t know. Initiate conversation with someone you are just acquainted with. Buy a coffee for the person behind you in line. Grab a water and a protein bar for the homeless person on the corner. Think of someone you have struggled to find something in common with and may even find “uncomfortable” in some way and pray for them.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for church multiplication that plants new churches and grows existing churches.

<sup>16</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness* (Illinois, IVP, 2005) 167.



# Day 9

## Embracing Pleasure in the Beloved: One in Sharing His Delight

How many of us have experienced the heartache of hurting someone we love? Or felt the disappointment of failing in the work place or not performing well in something we care about? Or maybe we have suffered discouragement over physical limitation or despaired over a struggle with sin? In a fallen world, it is all too easy for us to forget our identity in the Beloved. Instead, we see our flaws and inadequacies like a flashing red siren alerting us to the many ways we fall short. The rejection, disapproval, and criticism we often receive from others just adds insult to injury and strengthens our resolve to strive more, perfect ourselves, to achieve, accomplish, and succeed.

Surely the pleasure of the Beloved is lost along with everyone else's good grace!

In his book, *God-Soaked Life*, Chris Webb draws an astonishing correlation between Jesus' baptism and transfiguration that exposes the error of our identity-challenged memories:

When Christ stands on the mountain revealed in his glory, the voice of the Father speaks from heaven "This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased." (Mt. 17:5) And is it any wonder? He is breathtaking. We can easily imagine that if we were able to shine with such radiance, the Father would also delight in us and call us beloved.

But when we look back down the mountain to the Jordan, to the filthy waters and the crowd of sinners, a surprise awaits us. Jesus came up out of the river, the rank and polluted water pouring over him. There was no light, no Moses and Elijah, no radiance and beauty.<sup>17</sup>

This was the Beloved, identifying in weakness with the broken. And yet we hear the very same words that were spoken on the mountain: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17).

Webb goes on to point out that all of us hunger with hope for that day when, fully transformed, we can be identified with Jesus' incarnate glory, and hear the Father's pleasure. But we miss the powerful truth that as we stand with the Beloved now, "identifying ourselves completely with Him among the lost, the wounded, the rebellious and the penitent—even now, before any transformation can possibly be wrought in us, we hear this same voice: my son, my daughter, my beloved, in whom I delight."

<sup>17</sup> Chris Webb, *God-Soaked Life* (Illinois, IVP, 2017) 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

*Before any transformation can be wrought in us. Before any striving. Any achievement. Any success.*

*Can you hear the Father's voice today—right now, in this moment—as He declares His immeasurable pleasure in you? Can you see His smile of delight spread across His face as He looks at you?*

## Application

Embrace the pleasure of the Beloved today as you spend time in solitude. You may want to choose a place outdoors where you can tilt your face towards the sunshine and feel its warmth as you reflect on the Beloved's delight in you. If that's not possible, take a minute to picture yourself in such a place. After a few deep breaths, you may want to repeat the phrase "You delight in me" or "I receive Your pleasure" or "I identify as Your Beloved."

Once you are settled, follow the steps of meditation with Matthew 3:13-17. You may want to picture the Beloved taking your hand as you join Him in the water. Remember that the Jews viewed flowing water as "living water" as you picture yourself fully immersed (*baptizo*) in the Jordan River and emerging as one in the Beloved.

## Fasting Focus: Regret

"Regret empties anticipation, flattens dreams, and suffocates hope, because regret is a form of self-punishment. Whereas hindsight helps us learn from the past, regret beats us up with the past."<sup>19</sup> Choose pleasure today in place of regret. View any failures or mistakes from the perspective that they are rich learning opportunities. At the end of the day, thank the Beloved that He loves you at all times and that His mercies are "new every morning" (Lam. 3:23).

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Global Missionaries to impact eternity.

<sup>19</sup> Chole, *40 Days of Decrease*, 9.

# Day 10

## Embracing Pleasure as the Beloved: One in Sharing His Delight

How did yesterday's experience go as you embraced the radiant pleasure of the Beloved? We have been talking about the environment of One-ness that is our reality as those located in Christ. Now we know that His pleasure pervades this environment and, as we identify as the Beloved, we interact with our world as His pleasure-bearers expressing His heartfelt delight in those created in His image.

Most of us recognize this is no easy task. God's creatures can be far from pleasant and even downright ugly at times! Even those with whom we share a row at church! How in the world can pleasure even begin to enter the picture?

The apostle Paul gives us a clue. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul uses the same word for pleasure (*eudokeo*) that the Father used for the Son at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration. He tells the Thessalonian readers that they had become so dear to him that he delighted (*eudokeo*) to share not only the gospel with them but also his "very soul." (LEB) The NLT puts it this way: "We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too." In other words, Paul moved beyond the message to share relationship with these people and he was pleased to do so because of the tender place they held in his heart.

Now, Thessalonica had not been such an easy place for Paul. He didn't waltz in with a motivational speech and find the crowds "amen-ing" with a standing ovation. Rather, he worked day and night to cover his own costs while meeting great resistance to the message of Christ. Difficult place with difficult people? Sounds like it.

But Paul knew the secret to self-giving love. To a love that gladly served others without seeking some kind of benefit to himself. A love that put a strain on his time, energy, and money. He points back to this love in verse 7 and uses the metaphor of a nursing mother "who cherishes her own children" to describe the way he gently cared for the Thessalonians. His focus was on nurturing those that had nothing to give and everything to receive.

Moving as pleasure-bearers within our spheres of influence requires a shift of focus where value is placed on those who have yet to experience any transformation in the Beloved. Rather than waiting for an emotional warmth to envelop us, we give time, energy, and resources towards the restoration of His image in others who may have nothing to give back.

Bob Goff gives us a practical way to do this in his book, *Everybody Always*. He encourages us to see people for who they're becoming and to consider the difficult people as those God is using as our "teachers," training us in how to love others like Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Instead of our natural



reaction to withdraw from such people, with the Spirit's help, we can willingly choose to move towards them in relationship.

For some of us, we may need to go back a step and start with a prayer for our own hearts to be softened just to make the decision to pray for such people! That's ok. A heart positioned in the Beloved cannot help but beat with His. It will happen. It may take time. Just keep bringing these people with you as you picture yourself at the table of the Beloved. Let's try that today.

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anyone you find difficult or challenging. (Perhaps there are a few!) As you picture yourself seated at the table of the Beloved, imagine these people sitting next to you. Feel the Beloved's pleasure radiating, touching your faces with warmth and light.

Look over at the person next to you and see him/her soaking in His pleasure. What's happening in your heart? What thoughts and feelings do you need to talk with the Father about? Ask the Father to share His delight in them with you. Ask His Spirit to help you value them as He does, moving towards them in relationship. Follow the steps to meditate on John 13:1-11.

## Fasting Focus: Self-Serving Love

Be aware today of the things you do for others. What motivation is driving you? Are you receiving something in return? Think of ways you can give love today without receiving anything back. Pick someone in your life that is "difficult" for you and pray for him/her. Make some cookies for an "irritating" neighbor or coworker. Offer to mow the lawn for the elderly couple on your street or check to see if they need some handyman projects done.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for PCG Global/National Leadership to impact eternity.

# Day 11

## Responding Authentically in the Beloved: One in Displaying Genuine Transformation

We live in a cover-up culture. Truth can be buried with a bribe, age concealed by a facelift, and real life staged to sell a home. When facts do happen to get leaked, they are broadcast to the masses with blaring judgment causing humiliation and shame. No wonder we want to run for cover! And so we do.

Even in the church, we fashion our own fig leaf designs—spiritual smokescreen smiles that mask the interior of sometimes crumbling souls. We go through the motions saying the right things. Doing what we’re “supposed” to do. All to escape possible censure from the ones we perceive to be superhero-ing through life. Tragically, the only thing we end up escaping is the healing hand of the Beloved.

Unfortunately, it is often those in positions of influence who set the scene for continued cover up. Jesus points this out in his interaction with the Pharisees in Matthew 23: “You lock people out of the kingdom of heaven . . . you tithe mint, dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. You clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence...You are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth” (Mt. 23:13-14, 23, 25, 27).

The very ones supposed to guide others were missing it. They were caught up in a tangle of traditions that obscured the intent of the law and emphasized the external observance of it. Jesus calls them out on this in Mark 7:1-13 when they question Him about the disciples ignoring ritual cleanliness. He explains that nothing from the outside can go inside a person and make him unclean. Rather, impurity’s direction is from the inside out.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he continually invites people to acknowledge the innermost truth of their hearts. But for him it was not “to conjure up the kind of self-loathing and recrimination that fuels an excess of guilt. And not as a prelude to indulging in furious denunciations of moral laxity seasoned with promises of divine retribution. Jesus sought honesty about the heart the way any doctor would seek honesty from a patient: in order to bring the true nature of a condition into the open, to uncover the full range of symptoms and underlying causes and to take the first steps toward healing and wholeness.”<sup>21</sup>

In glaring contrast to the seesawing of today’s media that shouts out praise for someone one moment and humiliation the next, we have a God who is always, always FOR us (Rom. 8:31-34; Ex. 34:6-7). We are positioned in an environment of mercy within which we can brave authenticity. In the Beloved, it is safe to crack open the doors of our hearts and to allow the

<sup>21</sup> Webb, *God-Soaked Life*, 67-68.

Spirit to search what's inside. And when we do, restoration's wheels start turning as we truly meet the healing of the Beloved's hand.

Most likely, we are all familiar with the word "confession." Images of priests and enclosed booths may come to mind. However, confession at its core means to acknowledge the truth about something, to agree something is what it is. The problem with the human heart is that it doesn't come with floodlight exposure as to what's really there. And often we justify and excuse away what we do see. It takes time, intention, and a willing attitude to surrender to the Spirit's inventory.

## Application

Spend time with our Beloved Physician today. As you begin your time of solitude, you may want to choose a phrase like "Healer of my heart" or "Great Physician" or "Merciful Savior" to settle your spirit. You might picture one of His hands on your head and the other on your heart as He prays for you. Sit with Him and allow your heart to open. Follow the steps to meditate on Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24. (*The Message* version is especially good within this context.)

## Fasting Focus: Pretension

Be attentive today to the thoughts and feelings that are really present in you. Listen for consistency between them and your words/actions. Try to keep them in agreement and then offer them to the Beloved's truth for any adjustment needed.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for U.S. District Leadership to impact eternity.



# Day 12

## Responding Authentically as the Beloved: One in Displaying Genuine Transformation

Yesterday we talked about the challenge to live authentically amidst a cover-up culture. One of the biggest factors in contributing to our success lies in our determination to seek relationships with those that we can trust. But before that can happen, we ourselves must become a people that can be trusted. We have to go against the grain to create “a culture of vulnerability . . . of trust and care which makes it possible for people to be honest about their failings and moral weaknesses.”

### *How do we do this?*

First and foremost, the compass of our hearts must always point to the restoration of the repentant. Paul illustrates this necessity in his second letter to the Corinthians. After urging the Corinthian community to expel an unrepentant brother continuing in sin (1 Cor. 5:13), he admonishes them for keeping their arms crossed in refusal to welcome the now repentant brother back into the fold. Yes, there is a time for correction and even discipline, but our overall navigation must head in the same direction of the Beloved expressed throughout the whole of Scripture—towards restoration.

Keeping that at the forefront of our minds, our capacity to be trusted depends upon a deep commitment to confidentiality, a willingness to suspend judgment, and a consent to exercise patience in the process. Remember that confession at the core means saying something is what it is? We’ve all encountered the surprise of an unpleasant truth rearing its head up from behind a blind spot. We don’t always see what’s really there and sometimes don’t even accurately assess something for what it really is. We need help

But help requires those trusted to dedicate themselves to being present for those trusting, searching alongside them for truth. It may get messy. At times, even ugly. But a patient listener will take the time and exert the energy to try on the other’s shoes to understand how they feel. The exhaling relief when someone understands clears the way for the trusting to breathe in the truth. And then, the patient listener, being sensitive to the Spirit’s lead, can gently speak love . . . nudging the trusting forward even one small step.

Along with becoming someone who can be trusted, we must also resolve to trust. No matter what level of leadership we’ve been positioned in, we must pray for and seek out those mature enough to handle our stuff. Those who can safely see into the darkest corners of our hearts through God-filtered lenses and voice His perspective. Sometimes this might take our initiating such relationships and being extremely intentional about opening up our lives within them.

From platforms of leadership, authenticity can prove tricky. You might find it helpful to consider the distinction between emotional authenticity and strategic authenticity.<sup>23</sup> Emotional authenticity means being genuine in what we feel about something. Expressing our true feelings connects us to those under our leadership by demonstrating we are real people going through real things. Such transparency strengthens the ties of trust. One instance of Jesus doing this is when He shared His anguish over facing the cross with His disciples (Mt. 26:37-38).

Strategic authenticity consists of staying true to what our goals are. Consequently, it may not be in the best interest of the people we lead for them to hear about all of our insecurities about leading. This might generate a sense of instability and fear in them which would counteract our goal to lead them well.<sup>24</sup> Sifting through decisions as to how to remain faithful to authenticity as leaders reinforces the need for leaders to have those trusted few.

In the long run, living authentically binds together our words, thoughts, feelings, and actions in agreement with the truth of what is really there. If we keep aiming for that, we'll succeed. Connect in person or by phone with a trusted friend today. Talk and pray together about how you might be more intentional in encouraging each other to live authentically in and as the Beloved. If you are struggling to find a few people you can trust, ask the Spirit to bring such people into your life.

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude, you might picture yourself at the place where you experience strong relationship and connection with others (e.g., sharing coffee at your favorite spot). Face the Beloved and picture yourself leaning in as He leans towards you with eagerness. Perhaps you sit with your hands placed in His. Spend a couple of minutes enjoying the safe, close connection of His fellowship. You might choose a phrase like "I trust You" or "Beloved Friend" to quiet your spirit. Then follow the steps to meditate on Matthew 14:22-33.

## Fasting Focus: Being Untrustworthy

Can others depend on you when you say you're going to do something? Are your words about others critical or do they come from a place of discernment and understanding? Be aware today of any words or actions that might cause someone to feel unsafe with you. Even in your "hidden" life at home, be conscious of the way you talk about people and the ways you interact with your family or roommates.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for your local church to effectively reach your community.

<sup>23</sup> Christine Meinecke, Ph.D., "The Problem with Authenticity," *Psychology Today* (Feb. 22, 2012)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/everybody-marries-the-wrong-person/201202/the-problem-authenticity>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

# Day 13

## Found in the Forgiveness of the Beloved: One in Returning Grace

Many of us may be so familiar with Peter's denial of Jesus that in reading it, we skip over a striking sentence. The scene is set with Peter huddled around the fire with various courtyard stragglers. Three times he is accused of being associated with Jesus. Two denials later, halfway through his third emphatic "no," the rooster sounds his convicting crow. And here is where we may miss a powerful interaction.

"And the Lord turned around . . . and looked intently at Peter" (Luke 22:61, LEB).

Can you picture it? Slow motion style, the camera zooms in. The music surges as you see Jesus turn his head. His eyes lock with Peter's. Realization of what he's done slams into Peter's chest and the gavel falls.

Or does it? Do you think judgment fired from Jesus' eyes as he looked at Peter?

The word used here is defined as a "penetrating gaze" or "to discern clearly."<sup>25</sup> Other NT instances of this word are intriguing. Mark records Jesus' interaction with a rich man who sought eternal life. After hearing the man's affirmation that from childhood, he had observed the law, Jesus "looking at him, loved him..." then clarified the sacrifice involved in discipleship (Mk. 10:17-31).

Do you think it's possible that Jesus, knowing what was in this man (Jn. 2:24), saw through his wealth-secured soul and yet had compassion? What tender heartache Jesus must have experienced as the rich man turned away.

Returning to Peter, we see another instance where he received a "look" from Jesus. In fact, it was upon first meeting Jesus that "Looking at him, Jesus said, 'You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which is interpreted 'Peter')" (Jn. 1:42). With that discerning gaze, Jesus spoke to the man in front of him and spoke to the man he would become.

Although we do not know the specifics of their post-resurrection meeting, it is recorded that Jesus appeared to Peter before the rest of the disciples (1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34). Later, we encounter Jesus reaffirming Peter's identity with three repetitive questions, each one offering Peter restoration from his denial (Jn. 21:15-17).

Oh, what depths of mercy and loving forgiveness are depicted in Jesus' interactions with Peter! And these are our own as we walk in our identity as the Forgiven in the Beloved. Will we sin? Yes. For anything that is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). This means that

<sup>25</sup> James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1984) 28, G1689.

whenever we are acting, thinking, or feeling out of line with who God says we are or who He says He is, it is sin. So we live with the continual weighing of what is really in our hearts (authenticity) and what is truly True (faith). Repentance comes with the discovery that these two aren't lining up and godly sorrow about this will cause us to change our minds and return to the truth.

As the Forgiven, we don't dwell in the past, sitting in our sins and wallowing in our guilt. Rather, because of the grace of God through the death and resurrection of His Son, we have been positioned in the forgiveness found in the Beloved. This truth propels us ever forward, yielded to Spirit-transformation and moving towards living more fully in the reality of who we are in the Beloved.

The Message paraphrase puts it this way: "It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him. . . . God's way of putting people right shows up in the acts of faith, confirming what Scripture has said all along: The person in right standing before God by trusting him really lives" (Rom. 1:16-17).

## Application

Real life is being found in the forgiveness of the Beloved and walking forward as the Forgiven. As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to spend a few minutes quieting your spirit by whispering the phrase "I'm found in Your forgiveness," "Merciful Father."

Follow the steps for meditation with Psalm 103:1-5, 8-14 or Psalm 32.

## Fasting Focus: Perfectionism

Working hard and giving our best to something is a good thing but sometimes we go beyond contentment in our need for something to be "perfect." Be sensitive today to your expectations and the resistance you might feel in accepting anything "less than."

## Prayer Focus

Pray for your Church Leaders to lead with spiritual fullness.



# Day 14

## Found in Forgiveness as the Beloved: One in Returning Grace

Yesterday we pointed out the essential truth that we are found in the forgiveness of the Beloved. Identifying ourselves as The Forgiven is imperative to life in the Beloved because it is the catalyst from which we forgive others. Jesus underscores this fact with a story found in Matthew 18:21-35.

Peter has just asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who sins against him. The consensus back then was that three times was adequate. Peter generously doubles that number plus one and suggests seven, a number that also symbolized completeness. Still, he asks, is there a limit to such generosity?

Jesus' astonishing response—in essence, that forgiveness should be offered continually without keeping count—is reinforced with a story about a king who wants to settle his accounts with his servants. The amount owed by the first servant is the equivalent of what would be a few billion dollars today and is virtually unpayable. Yet after some pleading, the king releases the servant by canceling his debt.

The drama intensifies when that very servant seeks out someone who owed him a miniscule amount compared to his own previous debt. When he hears that the person is unable to pay him, he grabs him by the throat to choke him, relentless in his demand and ends up throwing him in prison.

That might have been the “end of story” if not for a few grieved observers who report his behavior to the king. After sending for the servant, the king delivers an emphatic reprimand stressing that the extravagant mercy shown to him should have impacted his life and values so much that he would be impelled to show extravagant mercy to others. The verdict? He would now receive the punishment he had deserved.<sup>26</sup>

This story radically reverses the all too familiar “I don’t get mad, I get even” attitude of the world today. Yes, we will get hurt. It’s inevitable in a fallen world and especially so when we are intentionally building community. But the community of the Beloved releases all rights to take revenge or to exact payment and goes even further in extending mercy and grace to their offenders. “Mercy is not giving to a person what he deserves, while grace is giving to a person what he does not deserve.”<sup>27</sup>

How do we handle the emotional residue that may be left behind even when we extend mercy and grace? It’s important to take time to listen to what we feel and express our emotions

<sup>26</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIV Application Commentary (Michigan, Zondervan, 2004) 624.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 625

to the Beloved or to a trusted friend. This will guard against bitterness and resentment putting down roots in our heart-soil. We also need to “listen” to the behavior of our offender and “respect” what he or she is telling us by it. If the offender continues to interact in ways that are hurtful and destructive to loving relationship, we may need to adjust the types of interactions we have with them. All of us are at various stages of maturity in living in and as the Beloved. Taking into account what a person is truly capable of in these various stages enables us to adapt our expectations accordingly and handle our relationships with loving discernment.

On the other hand, when we are the one needing forgiveness, bearing fruit in keeping with repentance is vital (Lk. 3:8; Mt. 3:8). As those identified as The Forgiven, we need to acknowledge and take responsibility for the hurt we’ve caused by confessing it to the person we’ve hurt. Just like we talked about yesterday, repentance means to change one’s mind so we need to consider (and at times even ask the person) how we might do things differently in the future. Finally, we need to take active steps to change the hurtful behavior or pattern.

This “how can I make this right” attitude can be applied powerfully within the corporate community. Intercessory acts of reconciliation on behalf of races, genders, or other groups wronged have proved to be tangibly healing for those involved with fortified unity as the outcome.

*How are you doing in extending the grace and mercy that’s been lavished on you? What steps are you taking to make things right when you hurt others?*

## Application


As you enter your time of solitude today, ask the Spirit to bring to mind those who owe you an apology. Picture yourself seated with them around the table of the Beloved. An accounting book is in your hands with all the wrongs committed against you. Take the book and place it in the Beloved’s hands. Tell Him you are entrusting it to Him to take care of as He will. Then picture Him going to each one seated at the table and praying for each one. Pray with Him. It doesn’t have to be long. Just a simple “Your will be done in their life, Lord” is fine. Follow the steps to meditate on Matthew 18:21-35 or Romans 13:8-10.

## Fasting Focus: Unforgiveness

Ask the Spirit to bring to mind any records you might be keeping of wrongs you’ve done or that someone else has done to you. Consider the possible reasons why you are holding onto these. Offer some encouragement freely to others today, especially to those you might find undeserving.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Messenger College to train Pentecostal, world-changing leaders.

The background of the image is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, a dark, jagged rock peak rises from a misty valley. In the distance, layers of mountains are visible, fading into a hazy blue sky. The overall tone is serene and majestic. On the right edge, a portion of a red and green flag with gold fringe is visible.

*"You look just  
like the One  
to whom you  
belong!"*

EPHESIANS 1:13







# Day 15

## Resting in the Beloved: One in Relishing Dependence

One of the most tender scenes in the gospels depicts Jesus calling a little child to Himself (Matthew 18). It's hard to say whether the child came running, drawn to Jesus with eagerness or whether he felt a bit shy, perhaps fearful to stand in the midst of the big people. Little did he know he'd receive the honor of serving as a timeless example of Jesus' definition of greatness in the kingdom of the Beloved!

In NT times children held no status, rights, or significance apart from their family. They relied solely on others and could do nothing without the help and resources of a parent. As such, they were weak, defenseless, and vulnerable.<sup>28</sup>

Yet it was for this very reason that Jesus chose a child to answer the disciples' question of who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven. You see, disciples in that day worked day and night to reach their master's level of expertise.<sup>29</sup> Not a bad thing necessarily, but Jesus takes issue with their very human approach! Jesus hears the ambition behind their question. The drive to achieve greatness through self-effort and "heroic accomplishment."<sup>30</sup> He tells the disciples they must "turn around"—literally, hit reverse. If they want to be great in His kingdom, they must change their mindset to become like a child.

*Humble like a child. Positioned in dependence. Relying on the help and resources outside of self.*

And this is to be our mindset as well for all who are positioned within the kingdom of the Beloved. With childlike humility, we are to rely on the help and resources of the Spirit. In Ephesians, we are told that the Spirit has been given to us as a "seal"—as if we bear a permanent mark that says, "You look just like the One to whom you belong!" (1:13). He has also been given to us as a "downpayment"—experiencing our inheritance now in part as a guarantee of the fullness that will be ours in eternity (Eph. 1:14). The Spirit is continually at work within us, transforming us so that we will have the "expertise" of our Master (2 Cor. 3:18; Titus 3:5-7).

The Spirit's power fuels our responsiveness to the Beloved and is our lifeline in accessing the resources of the Beloved. By relying on the Spirit, we will thrive in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). The Spirit will lead us (Rom. 8:14), and with His help we will love *well* (1 Cor. 13:4-8), won't respond to sin's attraction (Rom. 6:11, 8:13), will be sustained with hope (Rom 15:13), and strengthened in endurance (Col. 1:11). He will navigate our decision-making (Acts 13:2;

<sup>28</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 613.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 612.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

15:8), handle our defense against accusers (Mk. 13:11; Mt. 10:19-20), and bring us into truth (Jn. 16:13).

Humble like a child, positioned in dependence, we are the “rich and powerful” in the kingdom of the Beloved!

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, picture yourself once more at the table of the Beloved. The table is overflowing with lush fruits and vegetables, freshly baked bread, succulent meats and fish, and all of your favorite desserts. Breathe in the rich aroma of the Beloved’s feast and sit for a few minutes enjoying the environment with Him. You may choose a phrase like “You satisfy my soul” or “You are everything I need” to settle your spirit. Consider the people you’ll see and the situations you may encounter today. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which of His resources He wants to give you for these. Picture the Beloved handing them to you. Follow the steps to meditate on Matthew 18:1-4 or John 15:1-8.

## Fasting Focus: Self-Sufficiency

Be aware today of all the ways you might place confidence in your own abilities, strengths, and resources. Recognize these are all gifts from the Beloved and are dependent on His gracious power when these areas surface. Offer Him a quick prayer of thanks and ask Him to help you live in continual dependence.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for the multiplication of new ministers and the growth of existing ministers.

# Day 16

## Resting as the Beloved: One in Relishing Dependence

Few of us can say we have never felt emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual burnout. Despite technological advances designed to make our lives easier and our work more efficient, the demands and pace of life today often leave us weary. Pressured to perform, driven to achieve, we push ourselves to keep going. Some of us might say it's to be expected—we are busy doing “the work of the Lord.”

Yet sometimes below the surface of our efforts runs a vein of striving. It is sneaky to conceal itself behind honorable achievement and things of great import. But it's there. It crops up in competitive attitudes, comparison, insecurity, approval addiction, the need to control, and in spiritual pride.

Perhaps some of us are honest enough to admit we can relate to the disciples striving ambition in questioning Jesus about who would be greatest in His kingdom. We may have more in common with them than we realize.

The disciples lived in an “honor-consumer society.” In all areas of life, people were treated according to their status. At meals, in the synagogues, in judicial settings, everywhere you went, your place of importance was considered and recognized. Coming from the background of Rabbinic Judaism, those who maintained strict observance of the law were viewed as those deserving the most honor—“the greatest”—and would be hailed as such in heaven. The disciples, knowing Jesus had a “new protocol” for His kingdom, are driven to learn what these new guidelines are so they can work their hardest to be honored as number one!

Jesus overthrows the striving, achievement-driven mindset to be “on top” with the childlike lifestyle of trust and dependence. In another penetrating passage, He explains to His disciples how to “work” towards this lifestyle. Within the context of describing the intimate relationship He and His Father share, Jesus invites the disciples to “come” be *His* disciples, to do things *His* way (Mt. 11:28) He speaks to those sighing under the heavy burdens they carry—the physical and spiritual striving of the law—and encourages them to take up *His* yoke instead for He is the very One who fulfills the law (v. 29).

In doing so, they will learn gentleness from the One who rode a donkey instead of being honored in the royal court. They will put on the humility of the One yielded to the Father, expecting everything from Him and nothing from self.<sup>31</sup> And in place of sigh-filled striving, their dependence will bring them all encompassing rest.

<sup>31</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Secret of the Easy Yoke*, <https://renovare.org/articles/the-secret-of-the-easy-yoke>.

Do we want to be honored as number one in the kingdom of the Beloved?

Today, the Beloved's invitation still stands waiting for our response. Oh, that we would answer His call with the cry, "I want to 'work' on depending on You! I want to minister with *Your* love, carry through in *Your* kind of servanthood, and trust You in *whatever* You give me, even to the point of enduring hardship *just as You did*."

As the Beloved, we will seek to reflect this dependence at every level of leadership. We will consider the underlying motivation and the attitude with which we build our ministries, perform in the workplace, interact in social settings, compete in contests, engage in academics, and express our relationship with the Beloved.

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to consider going for a short walk. If you do, picture the Beloved walking just in front of you. He reaches back and offers you His hand. Place your hand in His and picture yourself walking with Him, side by side. You may want to use the phrase "I depend on You" or "Teach me" or "My Beloved Teacher" to help quiet your heart. Enjoy walking with Him for a few minutes. You can find a place to sit or keep walking and use a Scripture app on your phone to meditate on Matthew 11:28-30.

## Fasting Focus: Striving

Listen for any ways you "compete" with yourself or others today. What is your motivation and goal in these areas? If you see any children, watch for the small ways they display dependence and trust. If there's a child in your family, ask for their help with a task, take them for ice cream, or go for a walk together.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for the resource development of our global church.



# Day 17

## Relying on Redemption in the Beloved: One in Braving Adversity

**“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34)**

That this is the cry of the Son of God from the cross intensifies the force of agony reverberating within it. And with this cry, the whole world converges together and is joined to Him in the universal experience of pain. It has been written across the pages of every human’s story since the beginning of time. Yet, because of His cry, ours will never, ever echo with the horror of being completely cut off from God. He was forsaken so that we would never be (Dt. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).

No matter what hardship we may face in this lifetime, the Beloved is with you in it. He will hold you as you wrestle with the why. He will see you when no one understands. He will hear you when you have to get it all out. He will lift your face to His when you need to be brave. And He will walk with you arm in arm as you meet each new day.

He is the perfect companion because He surrendered the joy of heaven and embraced an identity of pain (Isaiah 53). While on earth, He withstood a verbal onslaught of mockery, criticism, character smears, and false accusations. He encountered rejection, suspicion, and misunderstanding. He was wounded by the betrayal of intimate friends and grieved by the loss of loved ones. He came up against violent opposition and ultimately suffered the anguish of physical torture and death.

Jesus is with you and is the tangible expression of the intense tenderness with which your Father loves you (Luke 1:78; Jn. 3:16). The Gospels are filled with records of His merciful interactions with the sick and the suffering. In many of these instances, He uses the word *tharseo*, which means “take courage” and could also be translated as “be bold” or “be confident”<sup>32</sup> (Mt. 9:2; Mt. 9:22; Mt. 14:27; Mk. 6:50).

In the Septuagint, this word was used “as a summons which men issued to one another in times of emergency and stress and anxiety” and reflected God’s readiness to help (Ex. 14:13; 20:20; Zeph. 3:16).<sup>33</sup> In John 16:33, Jesus reveals the reason why His help is reliable: He has overcome the world! He is “able to overcome what people consider immovable forces.”<sup>34</sup> Through the resurrecting power of the Spirit, He has overcome the ultimate “immovable force” of death. He is Champion, Victor, and Conqueror of everything we face.

In Him and Him alone, we then become “more than conquerors” (Rm. 8:37). Our confidence in Him leads us to experience the peace that “passes all understanding” (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:7),

<sup>32</sup> Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, “tharseo” (Michigan, Eerdmans, 1965), III:25.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *Lexingham English Bible*, fn. on Jn. 16:33.

find contentment in every circumstance (Phil. 4:11-13), gain strength from His surpassing power (Eph. 1:19), and be assured that He will bring good out of everything we go through (Rom. 8:28).

We don't need to figure out the how. When we face the storms, we can do as Jesus did in Gethsemane and freely ask the Father for a way out while simultaneously submitting to whatever He would choose (Lk. 22:42). He will give us just what we need (2 Pt. 1:3) and no matter what He purposes, we can "take courage" knowing we will not be shaken. For life in the Beloved means that we "are like a smart carpenter who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on bedrock. When the river burst its banks and crashed against the house, nothing could shake it; it was built to last" (Lk. 6:48, MSG).

## Application

What feels like it is "crashing against your house" today? As you enter your time of solitude, you may want to picture yourself before the Beloved who is seated at the right hand of the Father. He stretches His hands out to you, and you can see His nail-pierced palms. Place your hands on His palms so that you can "feel" His scars. You may want to use the phrase "You overcome" or "You are Conqueror" to stay focused. Sit for a moment and relish His victory. Follow the steps to meditate on Romans 8:31-38.

## Fasting Focus: Fear

Watch for the ways you are experiencing stress, anxiety and fear today. Listen for where you feel it in your body. You may notice a "punch" to your gut or your heartbeat speeding up. Release these things to the Beloved as you become aware of them and ask for His peace to sustain you.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for the development of our PCG Communications network.

# Day 18

## Relying on Redemption as the Beloved: One in Braving Adversity

Four friends straining under the weight of their paralyzed buddy. Thighs burning, backs aching, they struggle through the crowded yard only to find the house too packed to gain entry. Urgency quickens their hearts. They've just got to get him to Jesus! Lifting him up to the roof and settling him onto the surface, they start digging their fingernails into the clay and brush . . . (Mk. 2:1-12).

Many of us grew up hearing the story of these faithful friends doing everything within their power to bring a paraplegic to Jesus. But how many of us have considered what a relevant object lesson this might be as to what it means to "carry one another's burdens"? (Gal. 6:2a)

Of course, we are seldom asked to bear the physical weight of someone. In actuality, the Greek word translated as "burdens" in this verse refers to moral failures or backsliding, temptations and guilt.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the overall idea might apply to much more because of how the verse continues: "and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2b). Since the sum of the law is love (Mt. 22:37-40), it would make sense to include whatever burdens might be inhibiting a person from experiencing the love of God. It is our job as the Beloved to help!

We see the four friends determine to bring their buddy face to face with Jesus, and this should be our destination in carrying each other's burdens. In all of history, the goal of the Beloved has been to bring restoration to His creatures. Being restored means living as God intended us to live—bearing His image as we live in loving relationship with Him and with each other. So when we carry another's burdens, our focus is on doing whatever is needed to encourage them in this restoration process.

What is needed? Well, that looks different depending upon the circumstance. The hardships people face are so varied and sometimes unimaginable. We struggle to know just where to begin!

As always, we begin with Jesus. Yesterday, we talked about how He identified Himself with those in pain. Throughout the Gospels, we find Him turning towards people, seeing them, touching them, and stopping to listen to them, hearing even what is left unspoken. Often, He is "moved with compassion" (Mk. 1:41; 3:5, 5; 6:34; Lk. 7:12-15). These are all such tangible examples of how He was truly present with others.

So often we rush over the ache of another's pain finding it too hard to bear. We scramble to grab our "tool belts" heading straight into fix-it mode in a desperate attempt to lift someone

<sup>35</sup> Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:555, *baros*.

out. There is a time and place for problem-solving and action steps but there is such power in first just being present. To truly hear someone's story. To sit quietly beside them when there are no words. To grab their hand or give them a hug. Identifying with another's pain reflects Paul's entreaty to "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). In 1 Peter 3:8 we discover that Oneness is strengthened through sympathes ("sympathy") which is defined as suffering alongside someone and involves the idea of participation and understanding.<sup>36</sup>

Identification opens the way for healing. With hearts bent on restoration, we recognize that God is God of the means by which and the timing in which He heals. As His Beloved, He may use us to remove the pain or to help sustain a person in enduring it. No matter what, our aim must be to cooperate with the Spirit in restoring wholeness on every level: from the physical, to the emotional, intellectual, behavioral, and relational, up to the ethical, and, above all, the spiritual. We must address the lowest level necessary and the highest level possible. *This* is our work as the Beloved.

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to picture someone in your life who needs to be "carried" to the Beloved. Place that person in front of the Beloved and watch Him place His hand on them. Sit for a moment and use the name "Restorer," "Healer," or the phrase "You bring wholeness" to settle your spirit. Rest in His Spirit at work in that person and follow the steps to meditate on Luke 10:25-37.

## Fasting Focus: Fix-It Mode

Take time today to walk around your house and notice all of the things that may be broken. What happens in your body and mind when you see these things? Listen for brokenness in the people you interact with. Be aware of any urgency inside of you that may arise in trying to fix this brokenness. Watch your verbal responses and try to be present for them by just listening and identifying with their pain.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for financial solutions to advance the mission of the local church and PCG.

<sup>36</sup> Kittel, TDNT, V:935, *sympathes*.



# Day 19

## Remembering Refreshment in the Beloved: One in Celebrating God's Goodness

Who doesn't love a good party? Big or small, casual or elegant, most of us love the chance to celebrate life's milestones and events in a special way. The Bible is filled with various celebrations commemorating appointed Festivals, birthdays, weddings, and military victories (Exodus 12:14-17; 23:9-32; 2 Chronicles 8:13; Job 1:4; Jn. 2:1-11; Judges 16:23).

One element often present in celebrations is the act of remembering. In the OT, God instituted periodic feasts to help the Israelites remember His goodness and provision for them. As humans, we have the tendency to forget all too easily. We begin to overlook the extraordinary when things become commonplace. We forget that every day is a gift from God and that His Spirit is miraculously at work within us bringing about transformation and restoration.

Graciously, God has given us a pattern for remembering through celebration. Ironically, we often forget it and few of us see it as celebration. However, observing the Sabbath recognizes the rhythm of work and rest that God Himself modeled at the beginning of time. After six days of work, He "rested." The Hebrew word for rested is literally *shabath* ("sabbath") which means "to cease," but Exodus 31:17 gives us an interesting addition to this idea: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was **refreshed**." The picture behind this word is that of taking a long, deep breath.

Surely all that creating didn't wear God out! The resounding repetition of His pronouncement each day that "it was good" (crowned on the sixth day with a "very good") suggests His long, deep breath was one of great pleasure. A celebration.

In the OT, specifics were given as to what it looked like to "Sabbath" or "cease work." In the NT, the Pharisees were diligent to follow these to a "t" (even adding a "few" more for good measure) and blew the whistle on anyone who didn't. But Jesus pointed to the life-giving principle behind Sabbath observance as being what really mattered and declared Himself "Lord of the Sabbath" . . . the place of true rest (Mt. 12:8). In Jesus, we cease from all of our self-effort (our "work") to gain God's favor and salvation and rest in knowing that He has graciously given it to us.

The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to "enter in" to the Sabbath rest of Jesus (Hebrews 4), and we do so by living a life that recognizes our dependence on the Beloved. This requires an attitude of trust and gratitude, and the Sabbath observance becomes a regular rhythm

we can build into our lifestyles by which we remember God's goodness and provision. It becomes a weekly way to take a "long, deep breath" in the Beloved where we stop our efforts and celebrate that it is His breath at work in, through, and for us.

We celebrate by entrusting anything left undone to His care for 24 hours. We celebrate by reflecting on where we saw Him at work over the previous six days. We celebrate by expressing joy in refreshment, whether that means relishing the restoration from a much-needed nap, cherishing the beauty of a long nature walk, or treasuring downtime playing with family or friends.

For those engaged in church work, a weekly Sabbath often proves challenging. Sundays are usually all but "restful" though certainly can be refreshing and celebratory! It may take some creativity on your part but it's well worth carving out a 24-hour time period to celebrate in your weekly rhythm. When you do, you will experience the joyful refreshment in the Beloved. "For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs" (Zph. 3:17, NLT).

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to take a long, deep breath as you picture the breath of the Beloved filling you with joy and refreshment. Spend a few moments of rest with Him, enjoying His life-giving presence. You may want to use the phrase "You restore my soul" or "I rest in You" to quiet your spirit. Follow the steps to meditate on Hebrews 4:1-8.

## Fasting Focus: Seriousness

While there are times and places appropriate for seriousness, embrace celebration today by giving in to laughter, joy, and fun. Take opportunities to tell a joke, share smiles, and ask others about the things they are celebrating in their lives.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for Inner-City missions to reach the "whosoever will" of the world.

# Day 20

## Remembering Refreshment as the Beloved: One in Celebrating God's Goodness

It seems fitting to talk about celebration as we draw near to the 100th anniversary of the PCG. The Spirit has been the breath of our existence as a denomination, and this same Spirit is the animating center of celebrating as the Beloved (1 Pt. 3:18). We see Him present at the beginning of time, breathing life into the birth of all creation. And we see His presence in eternity in the river coursing from the Throne through the city, bearing forth fruit and healing and life (Genesis 1, Revelation 22).

Throughout the NT, this "living water," "breath of life" Spirit refreshes and restores the community of the Beloved as they gather together to celebrate God's goodness through worship, fellowship, exhortation, and prayer (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:4-5, 20-29; 14:26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). They share meals and testimonies, serve each other through various giftings, and express gratitude through songs of praise.

They remember together as they recognize milestones in their history as the Beloved, but they also look with eagerness to the future, to the Day when such celebrating will be experienced in complete fullness. In his book, *The God-Soaked Life*, Chris Webb paints this anticipated scene vividly:

... these people are constantly expressing their love toward God. Some of them are gathered together and singing hymns. But others are loving God by loving those around them, those in whom they know God's life so wonderfully dwells. Some are loving God by delighting in his creativity, and some by echoing that creativity in their own. But these people together are singing a great song of love, in words and music and silence and action and stillness, a song that rings through all creation and says: in life, in love, in one another, and in you, God—we rejoice<sup>37</sup>

Just as the early church celebrated together in expectation of this future and in remembering the past, we, too, proclaim the goodness of God through the life of the Spirit in the Beloved each time we gather as the Beloved. Like a choir, our voices blend together, diversity in harmony, a multitude of races, ages, giftings, and expressions, the Spirit uniting us as ONE in celebrating God and each other.

Together, we find refreshment in His life-giving water through communal worship, exhortation, and prayer. We replenish each other by exercising our gifts. We offer "drinks" of

<sup>37</sup> Webb, *God-Soaked Life*, 3.

encouragement to one another through fellowship and sharing meals. We “splash around” with joyful testimonies and praises.

The refreshment of His Spirit in these celebrations spills over, flooding the stream from which we draw daily. Then, as His Beloved, we carry this water “from the wells of salvation” to those thirsting for true Life (Is. 12:3). We move past walls of separation and journey with those who are searching (Lk. 14:23). We hand it to our neighbors, distribute it in our cities, and deliver it throughout the world (Acts 1:7-8). Wherever we go, we offer this water of Life and invite others to join us in the joyful celebration in and as the Beloved.

“What are you expecting for a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century PCG? Our expectations are based on the character of God.”<sup>38</sup> The breath of God is the Spirit of Life found *in* the Beloved, celebrated in the community *as* the Beloved and offered to a thirsting world.

*Let's expect to celebrate!*

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to picture the Beloved beside one of the healing pools in the NT or perhaps a cascading waterfall or gurgling brook. You may want to use the phrase “Living Water” or “You quench my thirst” as you sit quietly enjoying His presence. Think of someone you know who is thirsting for true Life or someone in need of the Spirit’s refreshment. Bring each one to the water and ask the Beloved for what they need. Watch as He offers them a drink from the brook or leads them under the waterfall or into the pool. You may want to picture each person in your family in the same way. Follow the steps to meditate on John 7:37-39 or Rev. 22:1-5.

## Fasting Focus: Work

Practice Sabbath-style refreshment today by resting from any work needing to be done. Let projects remain incomplete and take a long nap or enjoy a nature walk. Do whatever is life-giving to you and be mindful of doing anything out of the desire to feel “productive.” Enjoy laughter and fellowship while sharing good food with friends and family. Light a candle and reflect on the ways the Beloved refreshes you. Read a short devotional or sing songs around the dinner table.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for the Centennial Celebration and the Spirit-filled launch of a PGC 2.0.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop Wayman Ming, “The Expectation of One Mission. One Movement,” *The Pentecostal Messenger*, 93:1 (Winter 2019) 6.



# Day 21

## Finding Your Rhythm in the Beloved: One in Remaining

As our time together draws to a close, the question arises: *Where has the movement of the Beloved been within and through you over the past 21 days?*

We have reflected on what it might look like to live more fully IN the Beloved and AS the Beloved, ONE in Him and ONE with others. Hopefully, He has spoken to you in some way. How do we go forward from here?

John urges us to “remain” in Him (the Beloved) by using the imagery of a branch sustained and nourished by the life-flow of the vine and producing fruit as a result (John 15). The Greek word for remain here is *meno* and contains the meaning of staying, abiding, enduring, dwelling, and being present.<sup>39</sup> The background of this word is rich. In the Septuagint, it is used to communicate God’s unchanging character and presence (or nearness) with His people. In the NT, *meno* describes the Spirit who continually remains within NT believers which was in direct contrast to pagan thinking at that time which emphasized fluctuating “fits” of ecstatic experience (Jn. 14:16-17).<sup>40</sup> One might say that our reality of relationship in the Beloved is that the Spirit keeps us present in Jesus, and, Jesus, as our “High Priest,” keeps us present in the Father (Heb. 7:3, 24).

So we see that we have a Helper in the person of the Spirit who keeps us remaining in the Beloved. *How might we continue to nurture our awareness of this reality so that we continue to live IN and FROM it? What might it look like to persist in our openness and responsiveness, **to live in the rhythm of being transformed and living from that transformation?***

We have talked about certain relational patterns that might encourage our life IN the Beloved like solitude, fasting, stillness, meditation, and Sabbath refreshment. We’ve also explored what it might look like to nourish life AS the Beloved through intentional building of relationships by including and valuing individuals, interacting with authenticity, serving each other sacrificially, providing compassionate support for one another’s hardships, and celebrating the refreshment of the Spirit in community.

*Where did you experience the movement of the Beloved especially touching you? What steps might you implement in your relationships in response?*

As you think through the answers to these questions, remember that rhythms of transformation are flexible. What season of life are you in? Any steps you take need to reflect what you’re able to do in your present stage of life. Adopting a pattern for solitude when

<sup>39</sup> Kittel, *TDNT*, IV:576.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

you're a parent of young children is going to look different than if you're retired and have an empty nest.

It's also important to recognize what you're ready for. Take one step at a time, realizing that transformation is an ongoing process throughout life. Ask yourself, what do I want? What does the Beloved want? Answers to these questions may point you to specific areas He may want to prune or cut away to make more room for dependence. Or perhaps He is nudging you to step into places He wants to encourage greater fruitfulness.

You may find it helpful to consider the personal nature of rhythms of transformation. The rhythm that encourages you will look different than someone else's. Questions that might help to ask are:

*What fits your personality? What are you drawn to? Where could you stretch a bit? What time of day do you experience the most energy?*

*What pre-existing rhythms are already in place and how might you incorporate new meaning into them?* For example, you could think about how to connect meal times, morning and evening rituals, weekday and weekend schedules to patterns of solitude, fasting, and meditation.

Finally, understand that you aren't meant to do life alone. God created us in His image as relational beings. He gave us each other to root each other on in living more fully in and as His Beloved. *Who has He placed in your life that might commit to intentional relationship with you for this purpose? What will such commitment look like?*

"As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father" (1 Jn. 2:24).

## Application

As you enter your time of solitude today, you may want to picture the Beloved sitting beside a lush vine with deep green leaves and climbing tendrils abundant with fruit blossoms. Sit for a few moments and enjoy His presence. You might choose the phrase "I remain in You" or "You are the Vine" to help settle your spirit. Follow the steps to meditate on John 15:1-10. Then take some time to reflect on the questions from today's devotional with the Beloved.

## Fasting Focus: Substitutions for Sustainment

Give up everything you drink but water today. If this is the norm for you, choose something else to remove that has a continual presence throughout your day. When the desire arises to reach for that something, recognize the Life-giving sustainment of the Spirit and offer up your gratitude.

## Prayer Focus

Pray for One Mission—One Movement to impact eternity.

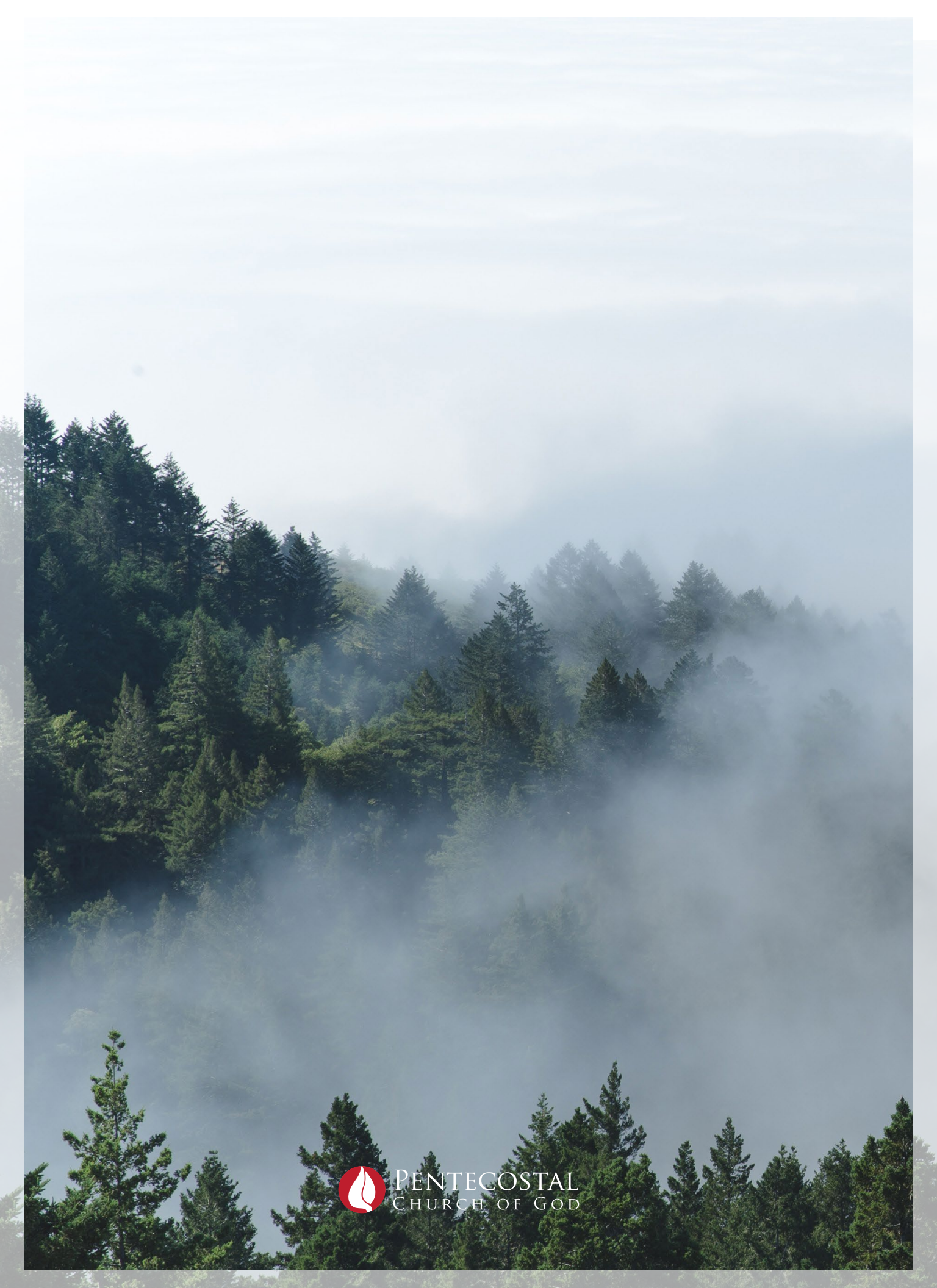


Jenni Gilbert is grateful to be the wife to the most giving man she's ever met and mom to three blossoming young adult kids. She is passionate about God's Word and about being intentional in nurturing relationship with God and others. She enjoys the beach, dogs, good food, and all kinds of people. Her love for learning has led her to study and/or complete degrees in Interpersonal Communication, Counseling, Biblical Studies and Life Coaching. For information about receiving spiritual formation coaching, you can contact her at [gilbertsco@gmail.com](mailto:gilbertsco@gmail.com).

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