



Partnership  
A Spiritual Journey

Dear North Village Church,

## Do You Remember?

As I sit down to prepare us spiritually for the next year my heart is full of reminders of God's faithfulness as He began moving us in this direction. I remember specifically driving down Burnet in August 2008 as Holly and I began to pray about starting a new church and as I was driving past Anderson toward downtown it was as though the voice of God whispered into my ear, "What about this neighborhood?" Honestly, my first thought was no. Not out loud, but to myself I thought it was too commercial, too congested, and too eclectic and nobody actually lived around there. And again I felt God telling me to take a left or right off Burnet and see all the families, all the children, and all the variety of people who live in the area. It was just beginning.

*John 4:34-35 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.*

In **August of 2008** it was just Holly, Tim, Jaya, and I that were praying and dreaming of what God could do in and through us and over the last year we have seen God move in miraculous ways. We watched Him raise people up with the same spiritual burdens we had. He gave us favor with strangers as we sat in their homes and shared the vision of what He had put on our hearts. We saw people give financially to something that didn't even exist. We saw men and women gather in our home as we shared our hearts and we saw God move in them and knit our hearts together, with one other and with Him.

In the **spring of 2009** we started having people in our home to pray, plan, and dream. We started a neighborhood gathering to explore spiritual truths with our neighbors. We had a couple move here from across the country. We saw students come from out of town to help us with a dog fair. We saw a people applaud our efforts to serve their community as over 500 people came out with their dogs. We saw a principal show us favor to open up her school for our use at minimal costs. We saw a friend pray to receive Christ. We saw our church growing in authenticity and vulnerability as we prayed for healing, for direction, for conviction, and for supernatural dependency upon the Holy Spirit.

By the start of the **summer** we had seen 3 more neighborhood gatherings start. Hillcrest Baptist Church partnered with us to help take care of our children. We saw more people added to our core team. We were able to practice getting ready to start gathering on Sunday mornings.

Do you remember? It is just starting. I believe we are only beginning to scratch the surface. I pray that your heart is full with excitement and anticipation in knowing that God is using each of you to be specifically involved in starting a new church.

## Purpose

The theme for our 35-Day Journey is “Partnership”. Our guiding passage for the next 35 days is found in Philippians 1:4-6:

*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

My greatest desire is for each of us to see how we can tangibly partner with Jesus Christ in the gospel over the next 35 days. Moreover, it is my prayer that this spiritual journey would begin to create in us a lifestyle that continually experiences the fulfillment of walking in Christ and with Christ.

I pray that over the next 35 days you will experience Christ in a new, fresh and exciting way. I pray that over the next 35 days our affections will be realigned back to Jesus Christ rather than the things of this world.

Will you take a moment right now to look through this guidebook and become familiar with the information and materials in it? In this packet you will find:

- A prayer and devotional guide
- Articles on spiritual disciplines
- A commitment sheet for your spiritual journey

Living on mission,

Michael

## **The Plan**

- We will begin Sunday August 9, 2009
- Conclude on Sunday, September 12, 2009.
- By the end of the first week, you should find an accountability partner.
- Make your personal commitment on the “My Spiritual Agreement” and have your accountability partner sign it.
- Spend additional time in prayer during the 35 days, both privately and with other Christ-followers.
- Experience the power of fasting in some form as the Lord leads you. This discipline will help you become more sensitive to the things of God.
- Follow the devotional guide given in this booklet.
- Journal your prayers and thoughts during this time.
- Pray that God will give you opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to your co-workers, friends, classmates, roommates and neighbors this fall.

## **Mile Markers**

- Make an appointment each day with your Heavenly Father in time of devotion.
- Objective: Hear His voice. Remove distractions that typically take up time.
- Get focused on Him by learning about His attributes, praising and thanking Him for who He is.
- Speak openly and honestly about where you are in your spiritual relationship.
- Evaluate your life by confessing and removing things that have come between you and Him.
- Spend more time than usual just listening. Just be quiet for a while and let His words soak in.
- Take notes on what you learn over the next 35 days.

## **My Spiritual Agreement**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in our 35-DAY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY as I seek a deeper walk with God. As the Lord leads me, I will do my best to spend consistent private time with the Lord each day. I will endeavor to regularly pray both privately and with other Christ-followers. I will also participate in an active accountability relationship, as noted below, in order to enjoy the maximum benefit of this time of spiritual focus. With God's help and encouragement from my accountability partner, I will do it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ (accountability partner)

## MY PARTICIPATION PLAN

(Check all that Apply)

- Spend regular daily time with God at \_\_\_\_\_ (time of day).
- Keep a spiritual journal, as a record of my journey.
- Engage in fasting by abstaining from:

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- Practice the following disciplines (see discipline articles):

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- Commit to corporate Sunday Morning meetings.

## **35-DAY JOURNEY | The schedule**

### **Week 1 (Aug 9-15): Partner In The Cross**

- Day 1- Entering Human History
- Day 2- A Call To Repentance
- Day 3- Riches Of His Grace
- Day 4- The Blood of Christ
- Day 5- Our Great Salvation

### **Week 2 (Aug 16-22): Partner In Prayer**

- Day 1- Priority Of Prayer
- Day 2- Why Pray?
- Day 3- Christ-Centered Prayer
- Day 4- Prayer Is Essential
- Day 5- Preparation By Prayer

### **Week 3 (Aug 23-29): Partner In Victory**

- Day 1- The First Step To Victory
- Day 2- God's Choice Tool
- Day 3- True Victory
- Day 4- Never Alone
- Day 5- Our Greatest Victories

### **Week 4 (Aug 30-Sept 5): Partner In His Will**

- Day 1- Walking With God
- Day 2- God Is At Work
- Day 3- The Risk Of Obeying God
- Day 4- An Extraordinary Life
- Day 5- Listening For God's Voice

### **Week 5 (Sept 6-12): Partner In Maturity**

- Day 1-Yearning For Christ
- Day 2- Trusting For Miracles
- Day 3- Vision Without Boundaries
- Day 4- Called With Confidence
- Day 5- Christlike Maturity

## **Week 1 (Aug 9-15): Partner In The Cross**

Day 1- Entering Human History

Key Verse: Colossians 2:12-13

In our lives, there are defining moments that determine the path we will take. There are events that forever change us. The moment the Truth is brought to light in us, we run hard after it, realizing that all we have ever known pales in comparison.

For the whole world, that moment was when Jesus entered into human history, lived a life of perfection, and willingly laid down His life on the cross. His death on the cross closed the chapter on mankind's separation from God, making a way for all to know Him-and know Him intimately. As the perfect sacrifice for the entire world, Jesus served as the atoning death necessary for us to come into relationship with our heavenly Father.

Jesus' death on the cross changed the way we live and interact with Him today. God judged sin. With the world's sin on Jesus' shoulders, God showed us how much He abhors sin, letting His Son die. God defeated Satan. Our heavenly Father triumphed over the enemy, stripped him of his powers, and exposed him as a liar and a destroyer.

Paul wrote that God made us alive, forgiving us, and paying the price for our sin. Through Christ's death, the barrier between God and us has been removed. Reflect on when the Truth came to light in you. How does that truth shape how you live today?

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Day 2- A Call To Repentance

Key Verse: Luke 24:46-47

The truth is that all have sinned. Everyone has done things that are wrong and made bad decisions, choosing to live independently from God and walking in our own ways. Those decisions result in shame, guilt, and ultimately being eternally separated from our Creator and as a result all of us have hurts and concerns. There is not one person who has absolutely no regrets. The good news is that every person can escape the consequences of sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Christian life can sometimes seem burdensome, exhausting, and even overwhelming at times, however, Jesus doesn't call us to carry that burden. No, He wants us to continually run to Him and the majestic work of the cross

through repentance. You can just lie at His feet, even now, all that you have been carrying, you were not meant to do this alone.

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### Day 3- Riches Of His Grace

Key Verse: Ephesians 1:5-6

Have you ever questioned why Jesus or anyone would love you? Have you wondered why Jesus would love what seems unlovable at times? When He died on the cross and rose from the dead and extended His grace through faith, it's important to be reminded that He is not extending a membership to an obscure club. Following Jesus was never meant to be something to do on the weekends, or a crutch to feel better about ourselves. God Himself is inviting you to a profound and wonderful relationship that brings Life, made possible through His death on the cross.

His grace is much more than forgiveness of sins and deliverance from condemnation; it is also a position of great blessing, a bestowal of every spiritual blessing. Maybe you have a great family, or maybe you have no family, but where ever you have come from, neither of those situations suffices. We've been crafted to want a perfect family! Rejoice! You've entered into the household of God, a family being redeemed! Take a moment to reflect on the blessing of being adopted into His family.

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### Day 4- The Blood of Christ

Key Verse: John 1:29

The depths of the cross are overwhelming to take in, it leaves me in awe continually that the blood of Christ that was poured out on my behalf. Below are a few truths to reflect on:

- **Redemption:** All Christ-followers have been redeemed and forgiven. Our salvation has been purchased, as a ransom, through the blood of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God who died as a payment for our sins and took upon Himself our guilt and punishment for those sins (Ephesians 1:7).

- **Justification:** God has justified us, or declared us not guilty, through the gift of faith when we have accepted Christ as Savior. His own arm has made us right with Him, what we in and of ourselves could not do, declaring us righteous in His sight, and applying the righteousness of Christ to our accounts (Romans 5:9, 17).
- **Reconciliation:** Jesus' blood makes it possible for God to bring us back into a right relationship with Him. The Bible says we were enemies of God until we accepted Christ. Christ's blood is the bridge, the peace offering, that reconciles us to God (Colossians 1:19-22).
- **Sanctification:** Is God's cleansing and setting us apart unto Himself for His purposes and His will. He sanctified us when we were saved, and He continues to perfect us, to make us clean vessels properly prepared for His good works (Hebrews 12:14).
- **Access:** Finally, we would not have access to God's throne of grace without the shedding of Christ's blood. The reason we can cry out and be heard by God is through Christ's sacrificial death. We can now approach the throne of grace with expectation and assurance that we are being heard and will be responded to by our Heavenly Father!

Isn't the gospel beautiful? It is like a diamond that when elevated and lifted up, catches the light, and the more you turn it, the more gaze upon it, the more beautiful it appears. Reflect on the truths of the gospel and on what God has done. Rejoice and praise the Lord for His merciful plan of Redemption!

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## Day 5- Our Great Salvation

Key Verse: Luke 7:47

Have you ever made a decision that proved to be full of unforeseen consequences? Have the consequences had a snowball effect until the final product is far beyond what you could ever have imagined? Realistically, sometimes this can be positive and sometimes it's negative. So it is when we meet Jesus.

When we first get saved, we have little idea of the scope and depth of our salvation. As we progress to Christian maturity, however, we begin to discover the astonishing power of the gospel. This discovery is facilitated by a humbling realization of how totally lost we were before Jesus found us. God is merciful in that He doesn't show us all at once! It's through this process and in light of the

gospel we get to see how we have been *greatly* forgiven. If our heart and mind were placed under a microscope and we were allowed to fully see how dark and wicked we are, we would have little trouble appreciating our great salvation.

Scripture teaches us that God made us alive together with Christ so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Apparently these riches are so unsearchable that it will take ages to properly display and understand them, but our gratitude can begin here and now. Reflect on God's sweet process with you, in showing you more and more of your sin, and simultaneously, showing you the depths of the gospel. Worship the Lord for what He has done!

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## **Week 2 (Aug 16-22): Partner In Prayer**

Day 1- Priority Of Prayer

Key Verse: Proverbs 15:29

A few words offered up without much thought – that is what many of us consider as our “prayer life”. Only in time of desperation or great tragedy are our thoughts put into words spoken to the God of creation.

Prayer can be so much more than that. Prayer is when we communicate with God, and share with Him our hearts, just as He shares His with us. Furthermore, it's also when we respond to what He says, walking in the direction that He desires for us to go. Instead of being an afterthought to our busy day, prayer is meant to be constant, providing a continual connection with God. Prayer is the element of our lives that we must establish and maintain with as much diligence as we do getting up in the morning. It's crucial.

Not only did Jesus spend a large portion of His teaching ministry talking about the importance of prayer, He also modeled a life of prayer, escaping often to the mountaintop to commune with God. It wasn't His goal to check off the spiritual discipline of prayer, but rather to draw close to the Father. How do you view prayer? What role has it played in your life? Ask God to show you the areas of prayer where He wants you to go deeper.

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## Day 2- Why Pray?

Key Verse: Luke 6:12

Have you ever felt like asking God why you should pray? What is the point? Does it make a difference? When life seems unbearable, when emotionally we feel empty, and the future doesn't look so bright; how could prayer help our situation? It is in prayer that we find a hope and a solution for every problem we face:

- Prayer readjusts the focus of our hearts and minds. In times of crisis, it is natural to focus on the darkness of the prevailing situation. But prayer moves us to look to a source of help that will never fail us. When we focus our minds on Christ and His ability to move mightily in our situation, our hearts will cease to be anxious. Peace will reign.
- Prayer gives us an opportunity to witness God's involvement in our lives. His greatest desire is to build a personal relationship with each one of us. As we worship Him through prayer and lay out our hearts before Him, He draws near to us and offers His assurance and gracious acceptance.
- Prayer helps us to understand and know the love of God. Prayer is our direct line of communication to God, and His direct line of communication to us. True prayer begins with confession of any sin, followed by turning back to God. This practice of confession and repentance allows us to receive the lavish love of God unhindered.

There may be times when we wonder, why pray? When the world is crumbling all around us, prayer is the last thing we feel like doing. But this is the time when we need to pray the most. Prayer is your greatest avenue of hope, because it leads us straight into the throne room of God, our Heavenly Father. What stops you from praying? What do you enjoy the most about prayer?

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## Day 3- Prayer Is Essential

Key Verse: Psalm 55:22

When our time alone with God is no longer a priority, we open ourselves up to the dreaded D's: Discouragement, doubt, disillusionment, and eventually disaster. When we no longer fellowship with Him, we begin to feel the spiritual, emotional, and physical weight of our earthly circumstances. It feels overwhelming and exhausting.

Prayer lifts up our burdens so that we don't have to bear their weight. Whether they are given to us by the Lord in order to teach us, or self-imposed as a result

of the decisions we make, God tells us to cast our burdens upon Him. Bearing the weight of burdens we were not intended to carry not only takes a spiritual toll on us but leaves us physically and emotionally beaten as well. Satan knows that tired and weary Christians are prime targets for his attacks.

- First, he strikes with **discouragement**.
- When we lose hope, we are primed and ready for his next weapon-**doubt**.
- A doubting Christian can easily be swayed into **disillusionment**, with God and others.
- Listening to the devils proclamations, “Where is God?” and “The Christian life doesn’t work!” can breed **disaster**.

Therefore, prayer is not something we turn to in times of need, but an essential for survival and protection. We see this vital role of prayer in Jesus’ life continually. What stops it from guiding you? Can you recall times in your life when you’ve seen a similar process take place as a result of prayerlessness? Are you there now? Reflect on where you are at, return, and recognize the enemy’s hand in prayerlessness.

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#### Day 4- Christ-Centered Prayer

Key Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Walking with Christ does not give us a free ride from the problems of life. When we encounter troubles of any kind, what if our first response was always to seek the Lord? Can you imagine how that would change things? God will always give us a solution to the problem in His timing. At times, we may have to wait for His answer, and the wait could be long. He often uses such times to mold our character and to teach us principles He knows we lack. Sometimes, we’re not ready for His perfect answer, so He has to prepare us. Finally, when He does answer our now Christ-centered prayer (no longer problem-centered), our prayers usually require an act of faith on our part.

Sometimes, His plans won’t immediately make sense. But they are perfect. Take a moment to reflect on your immediate response to problems. What do you seek first? Do you seek your own resources and abilities, your wisdom, or your intelligence? Do you run quickly to others? Let Him mold in you a new dependence upon Him for more.

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## Day 5- Preparation by Prayer

Key Verse: Psalm 31:1

When you hear the word preparation, what comes to mind? Do you think about life insurance, studying for a test, or maybe even packing all the necessary equipment before a camping trip? Of course, all of these things are acts of preparation.

When we prepare beforehand, we consider all possible outcomes and make sure that we will have what we need when the time comes. We explore any potential problems and arrive at a solution "just in case". After all, no one wants to be caught up in an unexpected situation with no idea of what to do.

Yet do we approach our spiritual lives with the same forethought, or do we tend to take more of a haphazard approach? All too often, we overlook "gearing up" before heading into unknown territory. If it makes sense to prepare for a simple camping trip, how much more important it must be to prepare for our lives!

We make this preparation by spending time with Jesus. Too many of us call upon the Lord only in times of stress; however, if we want to be ready for crisis, then we must seek the Lord when there is no pressing problems at hand. In these precious moments of prayer and reflection, we have the opportunity to calmly dwell in the Word, focusing on an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. In all seasons it is vital for girding up our strength and laying a solid foundation in the Word that will provide sure footing later on, when troubles come our way. It is through faith upon the sure word of God that we resist the enemy and are not swayed through each season. Take a moment to reflect on what you are preparing for in this coming year? What work do you want to see Jesus do in you and through you?

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## **Week 3 (Aug 23-29): Partner In Victory**

### Day 1- The First Step to Victory

Key Verse: Romans 8:28

Pride is tricky because it deceives us into thinking that failure is for the weak, not for us, who are supposed to be strong. We unconsciously assume that God is only working through our victories. But what does God's Word say?

In relation even to failure, Romans 8 teaches us that God works through our failures for His glory. Failure is actually oftentimes the first step to victory.

God's ultimate goal is to transform us into His image so that we more vividly reflect His glory, and He will do whatever is necessary to achieve that within our hearts. We know that His glory is most reflected when there is less of us and more of Him. Therefore sometimes, failure in our lives does it's humbling work in order for God to bring about His greater purpose of illuminating Himself in every area of our lives.

We may wonder why failure perpetually happens in our lives. We ask ourselves, "What am I doing wrong?", "Doesn't God love me?", "Does He want me to be victorious?"

Above achieving victory, God wants to transform us into His likeness. And when we fail, self-reflection occurs. We look upon our hearts and wonder what we could have done differently. We search and seek the Lord and oftentimes what is revealed are the ways in which our dependence was not upon Him, but was rested upon ourselves for victory. Rather than getting ourselves sorted independently from God, He desires complete dependence, oneness, and no movement apart from Him. This is for our good!

If we are willing to ask God what He is trying to teach us through our failures, He gladly will reveal lessons. We begin to recognize that failure leads to victory-the triumphant transformation of our hearts to totally trust God with our lives.

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## Day 2- God's Choice Tool

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:10

Just as pressure turns coal into a beautiful diamond, adversity can become a starting point for God to do something beautiful in our lives. He can transform our hearts, change our attitudes, and teach us what it means to trust Him and walk in true victory.

It's difficult because our tendency is to grow embittered and distrustful of God, rather than looking beyond the present struggle and recognizing what God is doing. But in scripture we see that affliction is God's choice tool for building character and equipping us for future work. Not only does it put an edge and depth on our relationship with Christ, it also enables us to minister to those we will meet in the future with whom we share a similar experience. This is a humbling and honoring experience.

Scripture paradoxically teaches us that we are actually strong when we are weak. Why do you think that is? Instead of hardening your heart toward the affliction you have/are experiencing, seek to discover what God desires to do in your heart and give him the full authority to do so. He is trustworthy, beloved brothers and sisters, He knows and cares deeply. It will only be for our good to give over our heart.

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### Day 3- True Victory

Key Verse: Romans 12:9

When life sends us sprawling, our response provides an excellent measuring stick of how mature we are in our relationship with Christ. (That is not to say that we should feel ashamed when we see where we are. God is not *expecting* maturity from us, but rather is creating maturity in us). A mature response, what the Lord desires to see, is one that demonstrates total and complete trust in the Lord. That is the measure of true victory and maturity.

For some, our first response might be to drift away from a passionate pursuit of God, we might stray from His word, we might blame others or God, we might cling to self pity, or even turn to means of escape through drugs, alcohol, or entertainment.

You've got to know that God's deepest desire is that we would turn to Him as we enter into the storms of life, and while clinging to the Lord, He reveals where our hearts are. Revelation accompanied by much grace upon grace and love. Victory, therefore, is defined not by our circumstances, but by our response to continually cling to Jesus Christ in the midst of our circumstances. Reflect on where you are turning in the midst of difficult circumstances. Are you holding resentment against God and others? Are you simply just trying to escape? Confess it all before God and run to Him, that you would find victory and rest for your soul.

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## Day 4- Never Alone

Key Verse: 2 Timothy 4:16

Most of us can identify with Paul's words in 2 Timothy. In fact, as we read them, we probably can sense the heaviness and thoughtfulness with which they were written.

Jesus reminds us that He is with us always and that He has sent us the Holy Spirit to indwell us and lead us where we should go. From a human perspective Paul was alone. No one with was with him. But spiritually, he was not alone, he was *fully* accompanied. Jesus was in him and with him.

The first lie the enemy would have us believe regarding God is that we have been abandoned, that we've been left desolate and alone. But, we are never alone. When we placed our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He invited us into the profound opportunity for God to display His power, wisdom, and supernaturally reside with us through life. This is extremely powerful, because our culture avoids this feeling of being alone. We see this through the desire to be constantly connected to people, (which is why Facebook and Twitter are so popular) to never have to feel that sense that there's no one with us, because we are afraid, afraid that we are completely alone. But you, Christ follower, be courageous and do not fear. The Lord your God is continually with you, and He will give you strength, wisdom, and victory.

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## Day 5- Equipped For Victory

Key Verse: Ephesians 6:10-11

In the lifelong struggle with temptation and natural desire, believers are told to actively "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ. This becomes a daily action by which you choose who is going to live your life today. Are you going to live, actively engaging in the old nature, or is Jesus going to have the opportunity of living His life through you?

The "old nature" is the part of each person that desires to operate in opposition to God or independence from Him. Before we trusted in Christ we were slaves to our old nature, but through faith in Christ's work on the cross the old things have passed away and new things have come. We are no longer slaves to our old self, but have the gift of choice. Once we are saved, we do fluctuate between the two natures, however, even if we drift over to the old, it is only temporary and the longer we walk with God the harder it is to stay there, because our new self has a new purpose, a new calling, and a new DNA. And this we find very hard to resist, because we were made for it!

Scripture teaches us we are in a battle in this life between the old and new and although it might feel like the old is winning at times, be assured, through the righteousness of Christ, the new has already won. Our victory is secure in Christ, having been accomplished through the Cross.

Therefore, let us no longer live as those who are of the old self, but push on to live as those who have been given new eyes, a new mind, a new body, and live in a position of victory. Who are we going to put on today; tired, old, exhausting self or the new self, through the Spirit of God in Christ?

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#### **Week 4 (Aug 30-Sept 5): Partner in His Will**

Day 1- Risk of Obeying God

Key Verse: Luke 5:4

Jesus was speaking to the crowds on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As they listened, they were so compelled by Him that they had to see Him, had to get closer and so would press in. Jesus, understanding their holy compulsion, saw two boats lying on the edge of the water near where the fishermen were washing their nets, and He got in Simon Peter's boat, continuing to teach.

When He was finished teaching, Jesus said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch". Peter had a choice, either to obey or disobey God. He chose obedience and the result was abundance, so many fish that the nets began to break.

Through the act of obedience, Peter witnessed a miracle. He realized that Jesus had his best interest at heart, even when he did not understand what Jesus was telling him to do.

As we step out in obedience to start a new church and live on mission with Him there are a number of obstacles. There are many reasons we hesitate to obey God: fear of failure, fear of what God may require of us, fear of looking foolish. What area of your life has God begun to nudge you about? God is drawing us closer to Him to trust and obey. When we neglect to respond in obedience we are missing out on God's blessing and getting to witness a miracle. He knows it's scary; He knows your specific fears, go to Him with those things and ask Him to grow your faith. Then watch as He does!

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## Day 2- Making Important Decisions

Key Verse: John 16:1

God has definite plans for each of our lives and is very interested and involved in our every decision. In light of this fact, how should we go about making decisions?

The Lord has our best interests at heart every single second of our lives. There is no time at which He does not care about us or long for our very best. This is why He has promised in Psalm 16:11 to show us the path of life. Later, in Psalm 32:8, God promises to instruct us in the way we should go, and that He will guide us with His eye upon us.

We have a God who sees past, present, and future, why then would we not look to Him to give us guidance in the midst of decisions that come up?

Instead of making decisions based on comfort, finances, stress we could bring those decision to Him. Learning to listen, learning to see, learning to wait, learning to persevere, and drawing close to Him to make those important decisions is key. Instead of asking what makes sense, we could expect and anticipate Him to lead us. What decisions has He placed before you just now? How are you navigating through those?

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## Day 3- Knowing The Voice Of God

Key Verse: 1 Kings 19:12

The most potent hearing aid known to man is the Bible. It is the standard of truth against which we can test every message that comes our way.

Hearing the voice of God can be very difficult. It can seem like we are hearing two voices, all of which make good points, but seem to tug us in different directions. It is in those moments that we begin to learn how to discern the voice of God.

There are several principles we can apply to what we are hearing to gauge whether it is of God, but the most basic is whether the message conflicts with Scripture. God won't tell us to do something that counters what He has already recorded for all of mankind. How does a child learn the voice of their

parent? It happens naturally by consistently hearing the tone of their speech, the content of their speech, and recognizing the character of their speaker. When we are unsure whether or not we are hearing the voice of God, we can look to see if the tone that we are hearing matches the God we know in Scripture. If the tone is accusing or shaming in nature, we can know this is not of God. God's tone is consistently graceful, full of truth, love and gentleness. We can also consider the content of what we're hearing and whether or not that corresponds with scripture. Lastly, we can compare what we are hearing with the character of God. Is the character behind what we are hearing patient, loving, merciful, and righteous? All of this requires getting to know His voice through consistently spending time in Scripture. Spend time in His word and soak in His truths. We must know God's Word before we can differentiate God's instructions.

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#### Day 4- Are We Listening?

Key Verse: Joshua 1:7

God communicated with His people in the Old and New Testaments through dreams, prophets, angels, and an audible voice. But what must He do to make us listen? God offers His Word to communicate His will and allows the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts. God also sends others to bless and direct us. Even in our disappointments, God communicates that our failure today can be made a success tomorrow (Romans 8:28).

As a Christ-follower we can know that in every situation God will speak to guide (Psalm 48:14), comfort (John 14:16), protect (Genesis 19:17-26), teach obedience (Joshua 6:18-19), or express His unfailing love to us (John 16:27). Do not allow the incessant noises of life to drown out His voice. When we fail to hear His gentle whisper, He has other effective ways of getting our attention. Are you listening? What noises have been consuming your thoughts?

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#### Day 5- Standing Before An Open Door

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 16:9

If we listen to the whispers of the world, it is possible for us to lose our focus in life. We can get caught up in life and forget about God's big picture of

redemption. We could miss the open door of opportunity swinging wide in front of us.

As we enter into a relationship with God, we find out that as much as He cares about us, He cares just as deeply about everyone else in the world. And as we mature in our walk with God, what is important to Him should become important to us as well.

People are important to God. He cares about mankind-it's the motivation behind sending His only Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth to die for our shame and guilt.

So, here we stand at an open door (starting a new church, a new school year, new relationships, new opportunities) circling all around us-opportunities that could impact the world in an eternal way. God doesn't open doors for us to simply peer through them; He opens them so we will pass through them with faith that He will empower us to do His kingdom work.

Standing before an open door never resulted in a single changed life. Walking through an open door has changed the lives of millions. Are you willing to walk through it?

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### **Week 5 (Sept 6-12): Partner In The Miraculous**

Day 1-Do Not Fear

Key Verse: 1 Samuel 15:24

Fear is never a reason to disobey God's commands, however, it seems to haunt us at every turn. In Scripture Saul was operating in fear when he went against God's commands out of fear of his men. He was looking through the lens of his resources and was found to be lacking. The result was fear.

This is a temptation in life of every Christ-follower. Many times situations or people will be threatening enough for a Christian to question God's instructions and commands. When God's will takes the obedient servant into danger, or a situation results in rejection, it is easy to allow fear to paralyze the believer into inaction.

Throughout Scripture Jesus constantly reminds us that the pains and difficulties experienced in the working out of God's plan are nothing compared to the glorious victory of helping another be saved from the eternal ramifications of sin.

If we are going to partner in the gospel then fear cannot be a distraction. What areas of your life are you looking at through the lens of your resources instead of through the lens of His resources?

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## Day 2- Living Without Boundaries

Key Verse: Matthew 28:19

The idea that nothing is impossible for God is very comforting. Just think about the parting of the Red Sea, the tearing down of the walls of Jericho and the Resurrection. All great overtures that God has accomplished.

However, when it comes to God doing something miraculous through us or in us, we may have some doubts. We know our flaws, we know our mistakes, and we wonder if God is interested in using us for a great work. Yet when God formed us He did so with a very special design in mind. And Jesus spoke about His plans in Matthew when He told the disciples to make disciples of the whole world. For Jesus, no nation or people were excluded from the gospel. God's desire is for everyone to enter the kingdom of heaven through the blood of His precious Son.

I have often found God's miracles aren't displayed in such a way that we can decide to participate in them or not, but rather, once we decide to participate with God, we will begin to see the miraculous unfold. He is just waiting for us to show up, to step out, and trust Him to move. Are you praying into the miraculous? What is He asking you to trust Him for the miraculous?

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## Day 3- An Absolute Essential

Key Verse: Luke 24:36

The disciples were startled by the figure before them. Though they had received reports that Jesus had risen from the dead, seeing Him in the room was almost too much for them to process. Jesus calmed them from the shock, "Peace to you."

At the beginning of the books of Acts Jesus tells us that a helper is coming in the Holy Spirit. Ephesians tells us that helper is indwelled and sealed within us when we place our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As we step out in faith to participate in the miraculous we must cling to the peace that is given to us through the Holy Spirit. Scripture shows us that Jesus is calling us to a supernatural calling that requires supernatural resources. When we respond to this calling with our natural resources it will lead to chaos and confusion, however, when we respond with supernatural resources it will lead to a supernatural peace. Are you experiencing that supernatural peace?

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#### Day 4- Called With Confidence

Key Verse: Mark 16:15

After the Resurrection, Christ appeared to two of the disciples. However, the news of Jesus' resurrection seemed too good to be true, so the other disciples, in their disheartenment, did not believe the reports. When Jesus appeared to them, He rebuked them for their unbelief. He knew they would need great faith to take on the commission God had for them, and that faith had to begin with an understanding of God's power.

Eleven men had the responsibility of spreading the gospel to the whole world. If we could trace our spiritual tree back we would all have spiritual fathers that go back to the disciples. I like to think mine is Peter.

They were eleven simple men with an overwhelming goal, fueled by the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Surely our task is not as daunting as that which the disciples faced, yet Christians often consider evangelism impossible. Imagine if we lived with their conviction! Ask God to reveal the task that He has set before you, maybe this year, or maybe this month or this week. Does it seem impossible? Reflect on what He has done through ordinary men like the disciples! Pray big and lean into His power, and take a step!

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## Day 5- A Work In Progress

Key Verse: Ephesians 4:7

Have you ever assembled a piece of furniture, a large toy for a child, or a model car? Usually each of these tasks comes with instructions, tools, and supplies for the job.

Some of these jobs are easy, taking on an hour or so. Others, however, may drag on for days, and even then may require a professional. Regardless of how difficult the task may be, you can usually depend on one unforeseen realization when you are finished: there are parts left over! Where did these parts come from? What did I miss?

Ephesians describes the body of Christ as a work in progress. We are a bunch of little pieces that have been joined together into a single, purposeful machine called the local church. However, the cause is too great, the message too important to have any left over parts. Every single piece has a job to do, and each one affects the others.

As we step out in faith to see a miracle let each of us take an inventory to all be involved and participate in an extraordinary call of seeing a new church birthed in central Austin. What and how can you be specifically involved in starting a new church? Take a moment to share this with your accountability partner and write down some specific steps how that can start today!

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## Spiritual Disciplines

### PRAYER

Use these 35 days to consciously make time for greater prayer in your life. Here is the model prayer Jesus gave us in Matthew 6:9-15. As you study the passage we suggest there are six areas of prayer given.

1. **Praise** “*Hallowed be Thy name.*” This includes adoration, which is acknowledging God for who He is and His character. The second part of praise is thanksgiving, which is expressing gratefulness to God for what He has done in your life.
2. **Purpose** “*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” This is praying in a spirit of submission to His will. It is praying in an attitude demonstrated by the words you use in giving your requests to God – words with His will in mind. It is sincerely submitting your prayers to what He wants as the final outcome.
3. **Provision** “*Give us this today our daily bread.*” God invites you to bring your request for daily provision to Him. He knows your needs; now He wants you to acknowledge them and place them before Him. Why? So that you will build a dependence on Him and develop the relationship He longs to have with you.
4. **Pardon** “*Forgive us our debts.*” This is confession of our sins to Him. Again, He already knows them but longs to have you walk in agreement with and dependence on Him. He desires for you to come clean before Him and to be free from the guilt that sin brings. In prayer we regularly acknowledge sin to Him.
5. **People** “*...as we also forgive our debtors.*” We should pray for the needs of others, our relationships with others, our forgiveness of others. We should love others as ourselves. Prayer for others is one of the best ways to develop a love for others.
6. **Protection** “*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.*” We ask God to help us with the battles of life – temptation, Satan’s strategy, physical protection.

During the 35-Day Spiritual Journey increase your prayer time by fasting from things like meals, television, internet, hobbies. Try to pray more often with other Christ-followers. If married, increase or begin regular prayer time with your mate.

## **BIBLE STUDY**

Studying God's Word is a lifelong pursuit. One will never fully understand and know the entire Bible. It is so deep, that those who have studied it for a lifetime still find new thoughts and insights.

We suggest that as you begin your spiritual journey, you follow the daily devotion passages included in this guide. Then as time permits, dig deeper. Bible knowledge is the beginning of growth. It is the food you need to begin your growth.

## **SCRIPTURE MEMORY**

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."*

Psalm 119:9&11

Included in this guide are verses we suggest you memorize for the next 35-days. Take a look at the verses and look at them often. Read the verses out loud five times a day and you will be able to memorize them. God's Word hidden in our hearts is a powerful discipline to help us "keep our minds stayed on Him."

## **JOURNALING**

In many ways the entire book of Psalms is a journal written by David and others. It is their record of prayers, songs, and emotions expressed to God. Through God's inspiration and direction, the Psalms give us wonderful insights that reveal an understanding of God and how He works in our life and in the lives of others.

Journaling may not be for everyone. Some do not enjoy writing. However, keeping a journal of your prayers and thoughts is an excellent way to add confidence, depth, and growth to your prayer and devotional life.

There are a variety of ways to journal. You may summarize verbal prayers you are making during your time alone with God. You may choose to write entire prayers. Either is okay; it's your choice. The main exercise is the recording of what is going on in your life and your prayers to God. Purchase a notebook of your choice and merely record your thoughts. Date each day. Possibly write down the scripture location you studied that day.

## **MEDITATION**

Scripture uses two different words for meditation. Together these words are used a total of 58 times. For many, that may come as a surprise. Meditation in recent times has been associated with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and even the New Age movement. Christian meditation, however, is distinctly different from other forms. While most other forms of meditation center on emptying one's mind, Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind with the things of God. So how do we do it?

The best word picture would be that of rumination: a re-chewing. Meditation is taking a thought from scripture into our minds, dwelling on it for a time, and then repeating that process again. It's the idea Paul was using when he wrote, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16).

The most common form of meditation is memorization. This can be done through simple verbal repetition, putting the scripture to song, or writing scripture repeatedly. There are many other ways to meditate, and none are superior to the others. The key is finding the method that works best for you.

In order to have the mind of Christ, you must fill your mind with the things of Christ. Meditation has been the practice of Christians throughout the ages to do just that.

## **SHARING**

*"Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what He has done for me."*  
Psalm 66:15

Throughout the 35-Day Spiritual Journey we will ask you to share with other believers what God is doing in your life. Sharing verbally or in written form reaffirms the work of God in your life. It will give you greater confidence of what He is doing. Sharing what God is teaching you also provides a great encouragement to other people.

## **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP**

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Matthew 6:21

This discipline is a very basic Biblical discipline. Your treasure and your heart cannot be separated. Money is one of the biggest topics in the Bible. God knows we cannot serve two masters. The discipline of financial stewardship is based on obedience, trust and reliance on God. God wants more than your dollars. He wants your dependence and partnership with Him.

Through your financial giving you make the following statements:

- I will trust God.
- I will believe His promises of supply.
- I will be a wise steward of what God has given.
- I will spend money wisely.
- I will grow in generosity.
- I will grow in benevolence to others.
- I will decrease greed, consumerism, and self-gratification in my life.
- I will be more connected with my church ministry.
- I will obey God and watch Him provide.

## **FASTING**

What is fasting and praying? How do I fast? What is the objective of fasting and praying? Is there any benefit that I can expect to receive in fasting?

Fasting is not a way to influence, impress or manipulate God. Fasting does not prove anything to God. He knows your heart better than you do (John 2:25; Hebrews 4:13; Psalms 33:15). It is not a hunger strike designed to convince God to release a special blessing or revelation. Instead fasting is a way to let go of that which binds us to this physical world in order to receive all our sustenance from the spiritual world.

When we fast, we can fast from food or we can fast from things that occupy our time (internet, facebook, movies, T.V.). When you fast, you determine that for a period of time you will deny your physical cravings to focus on your spiritual cravings. Fasting is not a last-ditch effort to get through to God. Instead, it sharpens our spiritual senses so that God can get through to us. The objective is to seek God.

Fasting is a classic spiritual discipline that has been largely neglected in our modern age. Yet, it was a vital discipline in the lives of the saints in biblical times. Fasting allowed early believers to gain increased spiritual sensitivity and to hear from God in fresh new ways. We even see instances where fasts were transpersonal – i.e., had an impact on another person. Historically, when a church would fast and pray corporately, God would manifest Himself in their midst with repentance, a display of His power, and revival. That is our hope and prayer for North Village Church during this period of 35 days of spiritual journey.

Here are a few suggestions to help you in your fast:

1. Determine the objective for your fast. We should fast for results. Some of the results you could consider might be...

- To overcome an addiction (i.e. chocolate, coffee, soda, TV, computer, etc.)
- To overcome a particular besetting sin.
- To overcome in spiritual warfare against the evil one.
- To seek solution to complex problems.
- To seek revival in our lives and in our church.
- To seek greater personal impact evangelistically.
- To cry out to God for emotional and spiritual healing.
- To seek physical healing for yourself and others.
- To seek understanding and connection with the starvation and deprivation that exists in two-thirds of the world.
- To seek God's will for your life.

2. Determine the type of fast you will employ.

- A. WARNING: If you are diabetic, hypoglycemic, pregnant or on prescription drugs, please seek your medical doctor's advice before fasting. If you are not experienced in fasting or have questions or concerns, speak to your doctor.
- B. Before undertaking a normal fast (water and/or juice only), start slowly with a reasonable goal. Only experienced fasters should consider a 35-day fast. If you are just starting out, pray about fasting for one day a week during the 35 days. Another idea is to fast for a particular meal, say lunch, for the next 35 days. A progressive approach could also be taken in which you fast one day for the first week, two days the next week, three days the third week and so forth.

Another variation is to insert a week of rest (where you eat normally) in between the fasting progression.

- C. Fasting is simply a tool to enable you to hear from God, to glorify Him, and to experience deeper dimensions of His grace and love for you. An essential component for your fast, especially in the beginning, will be renewing your personal commitment to holiness. This usually requires extended times of life review and repentance. Plan on allowing for this.
- D. There are several other components that are needed for an effective fast. They are a journal to record your thoughts and note what God is saying to you in your fast, and an accountability partner who will pray for the success of your fast during your time of prayer and fasting. (Isaiah 58:6-8) *"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard."*

### 3. Here are several scripture reference points for your fast.

Fasting is...

- Accompanied by prayer. (Daniel 9:3)
- Observed on the occasion of afflictions. (Psalms 35:13; Daniel 6:18)
- Observed in private afflictions. (II Samuel 12:16)
- Observed on occasions of approaching danger. (Esther 4:16)
- Accompanied by worship and seeking God's will. (Acts 13:1-2)
- Observed on occasions of ordination of ministers. (Acts 14:23)
- Accompanied by confession of sin. (I Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2)
- Accompanied by humiliation. (Deuteronomy 9:18)
- Accompanied by reading of scripture. (Jeremiah 36:6)
- Habitually practiced by John's and Paul's disciples. (Matthew 9:14; II Corinthians 6:5; 11:27)
- Prolonged practice, three weeks by Daniel (Daniel 10:2-3) and for 40 days by Moses (Exodus 24:18; Deuteronomy 9:9,18), Elijah (I Kings 19:8), and Jesus (Matthew 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2).

### 4. Tips on fasting from food (water vs. juice fasting)

- Physical benefit of fasting is detoxification.
- Water is most beneficial; yet this kind of fasting is not for everyone.
- Juice fasting supplies calories and nutrition, thus protects you against the stresses of work and activity.
- Fresh fruit and vegetable juice is best.
- Coming off three-day or longer fasts, do not go back to eating your normal diet for the first three days. Eat a bland diet of rice, pasta, fruit, fresh or steamed vegetables, beans and avoid meat – yes, no meat for three days.

