



FIRST BAPTIST ARLINGTON

Winter Challenge

2022-23

**"THE MOST
EFFECTIVE WAY
TO DO IT,
IS TO DO IT."
AMELIA EARHART**

This book covers a lot of material. Take your time. Explore it and pursue what interests and challenges you. Use your mobile phone camera to scan the QR codes in order to link to additional resources and articles on various topics.



NOTE: This is a workbook. There are lots of empty lines and spaces for you to write, reflect, and record what you're doing and learning. Fill the blank areas with your thoughts, questions, and insights. What are your goals? Who are you praying for? Where are you seeing improvement?

Write it down!

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IT'S TIME TO GET HEALTHY!

As you surely know, getting and staying healthy is hard work. Of course, if it was easy, everyone would be healthy. And yet, you don't have to look very far to realize that many (most?) people are not as healthy as they could (or should) be.

"Health and fitness" is a multi-trillion dollar industry. So is healthcare. Combined, they account for over 20% of the U.S. economy. Add in mental health services, and you realize that better health is big business!

Several reports indicate that "Big Pharma" spends more on marketing than research. I believe it! If you watch much TV (especially certain channels at certain times), you will be inundated with drug commercials.

Typically, these involve a diverse group of happy people living their best lives while an upbeat voice reads a litany of the terrible potential side effects of that medication.

The purpose of this **Winter Challenge** is to help you get healthier. We believe better health is both possible and preferable. And if you follow through on this for the next 6 weeks, there will be few (if any) negative side effects!

The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease and infirmity." In other words, health is about more than just not being sick.

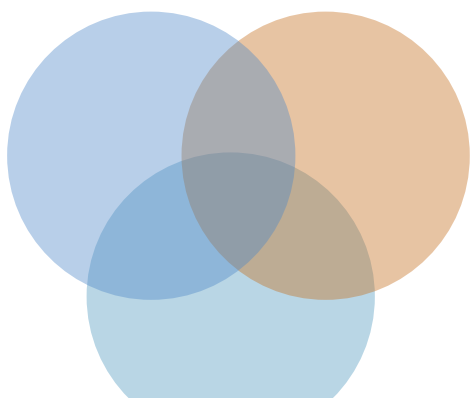
For this Winter Challenge, we're going to focus on 3 particular aspects of health:

Spiritual

Physical

Emotional

Each of these areas impact the others and all 3 are essential for you to be your best.



Before you begin, it's important to know what your goals are. And (like it or not) you have to start where you are. Ask yourself:

- What needs to change?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- Why am I doing this?
- What will I do first?

Don't wait until you "feel like it" to start doing what you need to do. Make a plan and stick to it. It's amazing how the right feelings can follow right behavior.

Remember... you are more likely to act your way into right feelings than feel your way into right actions.

The hardest part of a workout is putting on your training shoes.

The hardest part of a devotional is getting alone and opening your Bible.

The hardest part of a relationship is offering an apology and asking forgiveness.

There are lots of things in life you can't control... the economy, politics, the weather, other people's choices.

During this season, we want to help you focus on the things you CAN control... things that will affect the quality and enjoyment of your life.

This Winter Challenge will launch a year of answering the question: Why does it matter? In 2023, we intend to address several major themes together and offer a thoughtful, biblical position that will help shape and inform your worldview.

To start things off, we invite you to commit yourself to this challenge. Open yourself up to positive change. Ask God to show you where you need to get better. Then choose to do it day-by-day.
Here we go!



Curt Grice

**WEEK 1:
DECEMBER
25 - 31**

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Today, we celebrate the most incredible event in human history: **the Incarnation**. Almighty Eternal Creator God took on mortal flesh and blood. The King of kings and Lord of lords was born in the humblest of circumstances.

Dr. Luke shares the “manger scene” version of this remarkable story in the 2nd chapter of his Gospel (Luke 2:1-20). The Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, issued a decree that everyone in the empire should be counted. That decision set in motion a series of events that fulfilled ancient prophecies.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, referred to this as “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4). In his infinite wisdom and purpose, God had prepared the world for the coming of Jesus. Greek language and culture. Roman laws and power. Global travel and commerce. Time as we know it was about to be “split in two”... before and after.

God was establishing a new covenant with his people. His promises were being accomplished. Organized religion was being turned upside down. As Simeon would declare 8 days later in the temple courts as he held the baby Jesus in his arms: “My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all

people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

In 2023, we will spend a lot of time reading the Gospel of John. In his account of the life and ministry of Jesus, “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 19:25-27) describes the Incarnation like this: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-4).

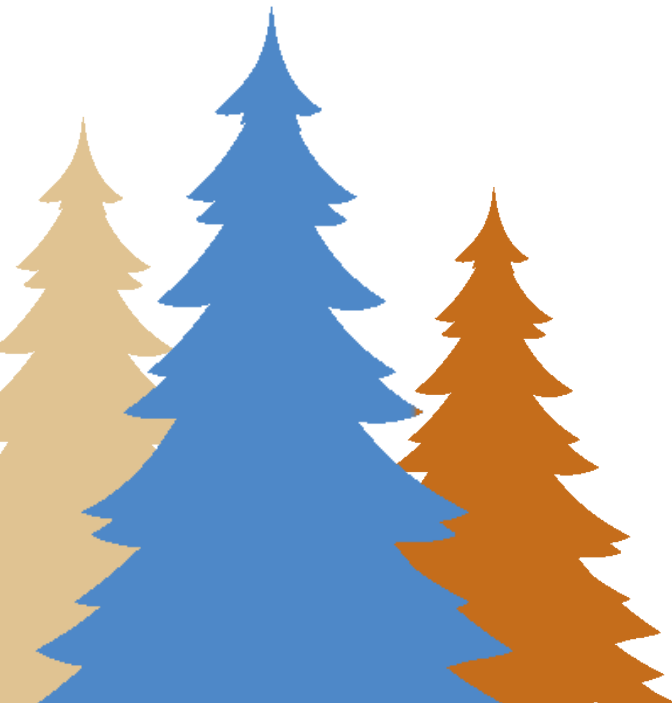
Our daily Bible readings this week include prophecies made by Isaiah about the Messiah some 700 years before the birth of Jesus. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus... our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. And the Apostle John offers us a glimpse of heaven as the persecuted Church enjoys a privileged place before the throne of God.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins. He defeated death and offers us eternal life. There's a LOT to celebrate.

Merry Christmas!



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

December 25: Luke 2:1-20: _____

December 26: Isaiah 8:19-9:7: _____

December 27: Isaiah 11: _____

December 28: Colossians 1:15-23: _____

December 29: Colossians 1:24-2:7: _____

December 30: Revelation 7:9-17: _____

INTRO TO MISSIONAL HABITS

In the coming weeks, I'm going to challenge you to practice five habits that will hopefully cause you to shift your life to be more evangelistically sensitive. These habits are from a great little book called *Surprise the World* by a missiologist named Michael Frost. These habits are relatively simple, but they're meant to help you organize your relationships so that you create opportunities to share the Gospel.

You may not think of yourself as an evangelist, and you may not be one. The gift of being an evangelist is not a universal spiritual gift in the Church. Those of us who don't have the gifting aren't off the hook though; we're called to evangelistic living. Paul would say that we should be wise in the way that we act towards outsiders, and that we should make the most of every opportunity; our speech should be seasoned with salt and our conversations should be full of grace (Colossians 4:2-6). These habits are designed to make sure that you're living life in such a way that you have opportunities to have grace-filled conversations with others.

My challenge to you this winter is to dedicate yourself to evangelistic living through the practice of the following five missional habits, which I'll explain throughout the Winter Challenge.

I'll provide details for each habit every week with some ideas for practicing these habits.

These habits push our relationships in three directions: outward, inward, and upward. I'm going to ask you to bless and eat with people who aren't a part of church. This is going to push your relationships outward in the community. I'm going to ask you to do the same thing with people in our church, which will push you deeper into community within our church. I'm also going to ask you to dedicate time to learning about Jesus and what he did and taught, as well as learning to listen to God in prayer. This is going to push you upward into a more intentional relationship of obedience with God.

These habits are a starting point for living a life in our community that points to the amazingly true story that we're a part of: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. My hope for you is that these habits will help set you up to have grace-filled, Jesus-centered conversations with your neighbors, coworkers, friends, and others. Know that I'm praying for you as you embark on this challenge!

Bless
Eat
Listen
Learn
Sent



Luke Stehr

HOW DOES THE TERM **EVANGELISM** MAKE YOU FEEL?

MY GOALS:



Brad Echols

SPIRITUAL _____

A Guide
to Fasting:



Benefits
of Fasting:



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____

MY RESOURCES:

FASTING: If you want to get in shape, you need to lay a foundation because getting in shape is difficult. There is a cost involved. Getting in shape involves replacing one thing with something better for you. Over the next several weeks, you will be attempting to create new habits. For those habits to take root, you need to create time and space for them to grow. The spiritual habit I want you to try this week is fasting: abstaining from something for a spiritual purpose. What sustains you? What do you abide in? Is it worldly or heavenly things? Spend time replacing earthly things with heavenly things. Replace eating, watching TV, or being on your phone with intentional time with God. Start laying a foundation this week for your spiritual health by feasting on time with God.

Tara is our Activities Minister at First Baptist Arlington. She has some great tips for eating healthy over the holidays! Hint: enjoy, but eat less! Scan to read all five tips to stay on track.



The term “emotional health” used in a church setting may put some folks on their heels. It may seem a little too modern or place too much emphasis on feelings (can we really trust them?!). However, listening to our emotions is a practice that has been part of Christian spirituality for hundreds of years. Read more about emotional health here:





**WHAT DO YOU
THINK IT TAKES
TO BE
"SUCCESSFUL"
IN EVANGELISM?**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Romans 5:3-5

MY WEEK IN REVIEW:

TWO WAYS TO LIVE

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2023. The month of January is named for the ancient Roman god, Janus (Latin word for “doorway”). He is usually depicted as having two faces... one looking backward and the other looking forward. Janus presided over the beginning and ending of conflicts and oversaw transitions.

As we start a new year... and a new month named after a mythological Roman deity with two faces... we’re reminded of the essence of the Christian faith. Almighty God is all about fresh starts and new beginnings. As our Pastor has said many times, the Lord is always more concerned about where you’re going than where you’ve been.

We will launch our daily Bible readings this year with some familiar, foundational texts. Sometimes you need to go back to the basics!

On the first day of the Green Bay Packers training camp in 1961, after a disappointing finish to the previous season, Vince Lombardi stood before a group of professional athletes who had played the game their entire lives and said, “Gentlemen, this is a football.”

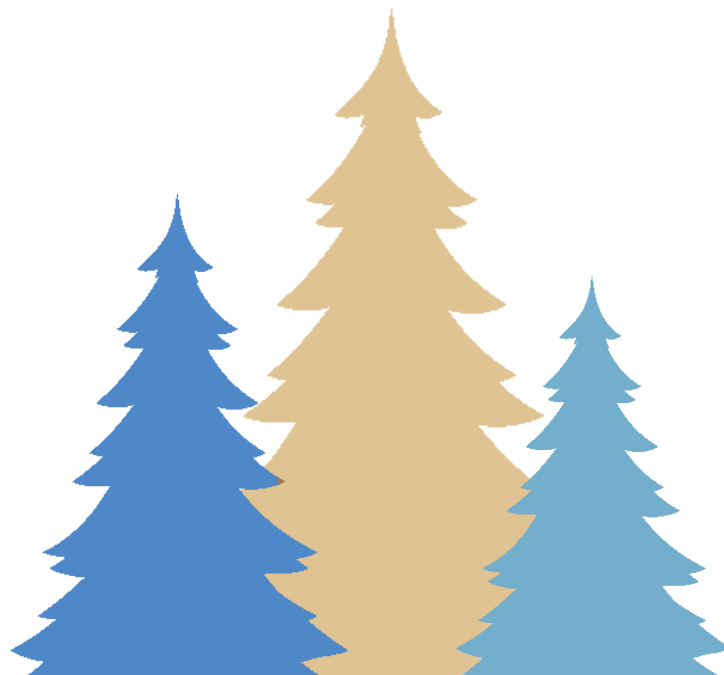
It's in that spirit that we begin 2023. We are committed to being Psalm 1 people who comprise a Psalm 1 Church. This passage is engraved in the baseboard of our Sanctuary. It is reflected in the phrase, “Blessed people bless people.” Transformed Christ-followers positively impact the world around them.

Psalm 1 illustrates the foundational truth that there are two ways to live: God’s way or man’s way. We must choose each day to either walk in the way of the righteous or the way of the wicked. We must choose each day to delight in the goodness and glory of God or pursue the pleasure and distraction of sin.

We want to help you be a Psalm 1 Tree this year. We want you to develop deep roots grounded in your identity as a child of God. We want you to develop a strong trunk as you grow in the knowledge of God and his Word. We want you to develop fruitful branches as you let the Spirit of God work through you. Here we go!



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

January 1: Psalm 1: _____

January 2: Psalm 1: _____

January 3: Psalm 23: _____

January 4: Romans 8: _____

January 5: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11: _____

January 6: Philippians 2:1-18: _____

MISSIONAL HABIT 1: BLESS

This week, I want you to bless three people: someone who is a part of our church, someone who isn't part of our church (ideally not part of any church), and then someone from either category.

We know that the early church was able to share the Gospel and grow expansively because of its commitment to living generously. Paul tells the church in Galatia "Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have every opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:9-10).

Blessing others is about being committed to doing good to all people, especially those who are part of the family of God!

This habit is meant to propel you outward into the lives of people around you. If you are attentively seeking opportunities to care for others and to find a way to lighten their load, then you will find yourself in conversation with people who are curious about your generous and kind presence. When we are people who are marked by compassion and love, people will take notice and doors will open to share the good news of Jesus.

There are essentially three ways to bless people:

Words of Affirmation - Giving an encouraging or affirming word to someone through note, e-mail, text, in-person, or over the phone.

Acts of Kindness - Is there something you can do for someone else? Mow a lawn? Babysit for free? Help a neighbor with a chore? What's a way you can offer practical assistance to someone, and hopefully deepen your relationship with them?

Gifts - Giving a thoughtful and good gift is a way to communicate love and generosity. It doesn't have to be expensive or grand, but it does need to communicate intentionality. This isn't just an excuse to get rid of a bad Christmas present.

You might find a spontaneous opportunity to bless someone this week, but it's also good to think about things you can do in advance!

This habit may not seem very big, but I want you to think for a minute and imagine what our church would be like if everyone from FBCA blessed one person outside the church each week. How would our relationships in our community change? Imagine if everyone in our church blessed someone else in our church each week. Isn't that the kind of generous church you'd like to be a part of and bring people into?

In the space below, think about people you can bless this week and how you can bless them. We're praying for you!



THIS WEEK I COULD BLESS:

1 _____ by _____

2 _____ by _____

3 _____ by _____

MY GOALS:



Brad Echols

SPIRITUAL _____

Journal Page



Scriptures



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____

MY RESOURCES:


THANKSGIVING: Are you intentional in thanking God for his provision in your life? If you want to be spiritually fit, you need to make time to thank God for his blessings. Through the act of thanksgiving, we remember that God is the one who provides all our needs. Being thankful reminds us to rely on God and brings us joy as we stop and see his goodness in our life. Making time to be thankful can bring us encouragement as we see God at work, transforming our lives. How can you be thankful this week? Start with a journal of gratitude and keep track of God's blessings in your life. Share with someone this week why you are thankful or even pay it forward by practicing a thankful act and blessing someone's life.

Forming habits is key to maintaining your physical health, and sometimes having a friend to exercise with is just what you need. Tara Tomes (tara.tomes@fbca.org) gives us some tips for forming habits as well as what classes are coming up in our Family Life Center. Scan for more:



As Christians made in the image of God, rest and self-care are our responsibility. This doesn't mean we value ourselves above others, but we steward our most valuable resource so that we might be our best selves to God and the people He has put in our lives. Read more here:





"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14

**THIS WEEK,
I FELT REALLY
SUCCESSFUL IN:**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**









WEEK 3:
JANUARY
8-14

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD!

The Bible starts off by declaring a basic truth: everything begins with God. That profound reality literally impacts everything else. We will spend much of this year answering the question: Why does it matter? The short answer is:

God! Almighty God gives meaning and purpose to all of existence.

Of course, if it's all about God, that means it's not all about you and me. And therein lies the problem. Throughout history, humans have embraced the mistaken idea that life is all about them. And that's never been truer than today.

In his excellent book, Strange New World, Carl R. Trueman addresses "the notion of self." He says, "The modern self assumes the authority of inner feelings and sees authenticity as defined by the ability to give social expression to the same. The modern self also assumes that society at large will recognize and affirm this behavior. In short, the modern self is one where authenticity is achieved by acting outwardly in accordance with one's inward feelings."

You and I were made for God, not the other way around. The purpose of our lives is far greater than our personal fulfillment or happiness or pleasure. If we want to understand the true meaning of life, we must start with God, not us.

Eugene Peterson translates Ephesians 1:11 like this: "It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone."

Our daily Bible readings this week offer insight into The Great I AM... who was and is and is to come. These passages provide a glimpse into the compassion and complexity of Almighty God. Genesis doesn't argue for the existence of God, which is obvious and assumed. Genesis offers an account of the activity of God, which is beyond our ability to grasp.

Remember: its all about God!



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

January 8: Genesis 1:1-2:3: _____

January 9: Genesis 1:1-2:3: _____

January 10: Exodus 3:1-15: _____

January 11: Hosea 11:1-11: _____

January 12: Isaiah 55: _____

January 13: John 1:1-18: _____

MISSIONAL HABIT 2: EAT

Eat! It's my favorite habit. We want you to eat with three people this week: someone who isn't part of our church (or any church, ideally); someone who is part of our church; and someone from either category.

Did you know in the Gospels there are three "The Son of Man" statements? The first two are:

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

The last one is "The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Luke 7:34). Some Biblical scholars point to the first two statements as "why" statements: they explain WHY Jesus came. The third statement is the HOW statement. Jesus ate with them.

If we're going to use Jesus as a model for mission, then eating with the lost should be one of our main activities! Around the table, our conversations inevitably wind toward the personal, and in those moments we have the opportunity to weave in conversation seasoned with grace. If you love Jesus, it's going to come out as you make conversation around the table.

In his book *A Meal with Jesus*, Tim Chester says, "Jesus didn't run projects, establish ministries, create programs, or put on events. He ate meals. If you routinely share meals and you have a passion for Jesus, then you'll be doing

mission. It's not that meals save people. People are saved through the gospel message. But meals will create natural opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what you're saying."

So, eat with people! You may be exposed to new foods that you've never tried, but be a good guest or a good host. If you're inviting your Muslim neighbor over for a meal, make sure there isn't any pork or pork byproducts in any of the food. If you're inviting a Hindu over, avoid beef and realize they may be vegetarian.

We live in an incredibly diverse city, so in your meals with people there's a good chance you'll be exposed to different viewpoints or asked questions you've never considered. Be honest if you don't know the answer, but to the best of your ability, focus your answers on Jesus! Jesus is compelling.

I hope your meals go well. Assuming you eat breakfast, you eat 21 meals a week. We're asking you to take three of those and turn them into opportunities to build relationships inside and outside of our church.

We're praying for you as you eat with people. Add your habit of eating to your habit of blessing.



Luke Stehr

THIS WEEK, I WILL SHARE A MEAL WITH:

1 _____ on _____

2 _____ on _____

3 _____ on _____

MY GOALS:



Brad Echols

SPIRITUAL _____

Partnership:



Koinonia:



MY RESOURCES:

FELLOWSHIP: Getting in shape is more fun when you have someone coming alongside to support and encourage you. God created us with the desire to be in relationships with others. Christians often call this "fellowship." Fellowship is more than just getting together to eat. Fellowship is about sharing with someone what God is doing in your life. Fellowship involves meaningful conversations about the successes and struggles of following the Jesus Way. How is God challenging your faith? How does he comfort you? How has he shown up in your life? These are things to be shared in fellowship with other believers. These types of conversations are sometimes difficult and uncomfortable, but they're the types of conversations that provide accountability, growth, and spiritual fitness. This week practice true fellowship by having lunch, grabbing coffee, or making a phone call to someone and share how God is at work in your life.



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



It's remarkable how proper hydration keeps our bodies healthy. This week, Tara Tomes brings you some tips for staying hydrated and why it's so important for your health. Have a question? Email her at tara.tomes@fbca.org.




Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____

One challenge facing most of us is creating margin in our lives. Think of margin like this: every piece of notebook paper we used in school had margins on the sides which were blank space not to be filled. They kept us from running off the edge and made our pages more balanced and easier to read. Margin in the life of a Christian is similar. Read more here:





"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us." Hebrews 12:1

**THIS WEEK,
I FELT REALLY
SUCCESSFUL IN:**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**







WEEK 4:
JANUARY
15-21

GOD CREATED EVERYTHING

The James Webb Space Telescope was launched on December 25, 2021. In recent days, its high-resolution mirrors have captured never seen images of the universe including sights too old, distant, or faint for the Hubble Space Telescope to detect.

One of the most amazing pictures so far is of the famous “Pillars of Creation.” These staggeringly massive columns of interstellar gas and dust continue to create new stars in the Eagle Nebula some 7,000 light-years from Earth.

The name “Pillars of Creation” apparently came from an 1857 sermon by London pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon titled “The Condescension of Christ.” In it, he says, “And now wonder, ye angels, the Infinite has become an infant; he, upon whose shoulders the universe doth hang, hangs at his mother’s breast; He who created all things, and bears up the **pillars of creation**, hath now become so weak, that He must be carried by a woman.”

Obviously, the James Webb Space Telescope will only ever capture a fraction of the cosmos. Some have estimated that the observable universe

is 93 billion light-years in diameter, but no one really knows. All we do know is that the universe was invented by God and for God. Time, space, matter, energy, and movement were all designed and developed by God. He created it all and he’s in charge of it all.

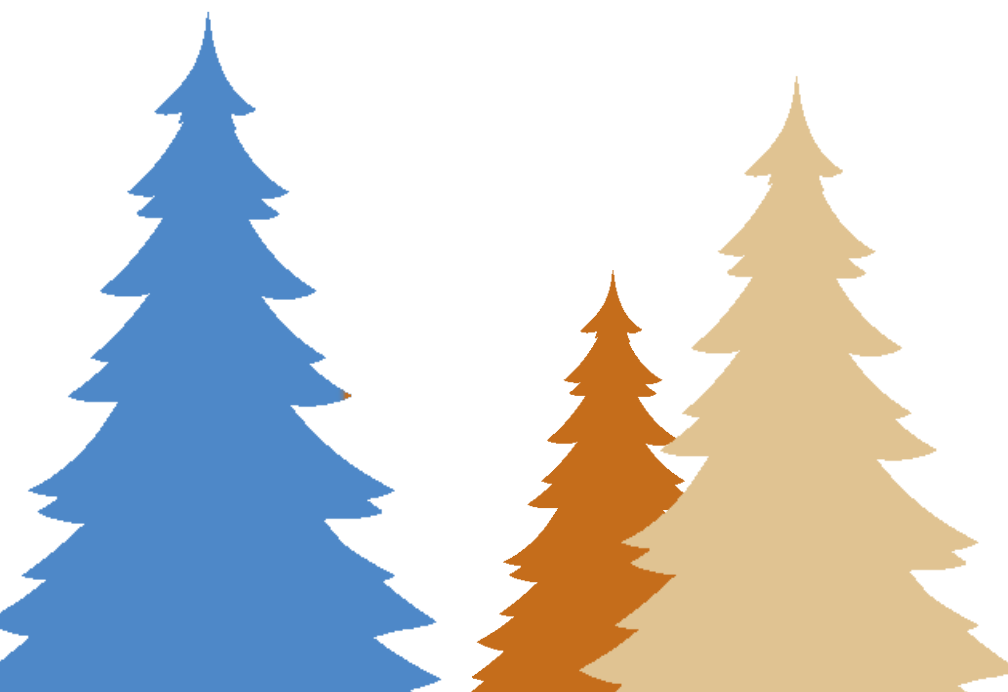
Colossians 1:16-17 puts it this way: “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

As you read and meditate on God’s Word this week, may you be amazed once again at the infinite and expansive transcendence of Creator God and his personal and intimate compassion for his creation. “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8).

Indeed, all creation sings his praise!



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

January 15: Genesis 1:1-2:3: _____

January 16: Genesis 1:1-2:3: _____

January 17: Psalm 19: _____

January 18: Job 38: _____

January 19: Job 39: _____

January 20: John 1:1-18: _____

MISSIONAL HABIT 3: LISTEN

Listening to God in prayer is often a new habit for many of us, but as Christians we believe the Holy Spirit dwells within us to give us guidance. We want you to practice listening to God in prayer so that you can be more responsive when you feel God leading or prompting you.

Think about it like this: at this very moment, radio waves surround you. You can't see them or hear them. If you were to turn on a radio you might only hear static, but if you knew how to tune the radio to the right frequency, you'd be able to hear the broadcast.

God is even more present to us than radio waves. We, through practicing listening to God in prayer, can learn to tune into God's guiding and sustaining presence in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Learning to be led by the Spirit of God will propel us into missional living. The Spirit will be able to help us discern next steps to take in relationship, to say what a person needs to hear, and to share the Gospel with others well.

So how do we learn to listen? We set aside a regular time of silence each week, in which we make space in our minds to learn to tune out the noises of our lives and to learn to discerningly tune our attention to God's voice.

We make space on our calendar. We set aside time to be alone, in a quiet place. This practice is challenging, and it might be the hardest of all the habits to maintain, but if we want to learn to be led by and to hear from the Holy Spirit, it

is essential to cultivate a habit of listening.

In your period of silence, sit in a comfortable place free from distractions. Avoid sitting in a position that will cause your arms or legs to fall asleep, as it will be incredibly distracting if that happens. Close your eyes in a dark or semi-dark place, and set a timer with a gentle alarm for at least ten minutes and ideally twenty minutes. Sometimes it takes ten minutes to simply settle your own thoughts and to fully enter a disposition of prayerful listening.

As you sit, don't start by telling God what you want, what you need, or by asking questions. God knows your wants and needs, and knows your questions. This time is about being with God in God's presence. You might find it helpful to settle your mind by using a word or phrase from Scripture to call your attention back to God's presence when you feel your own thoughts distracting you. This might simply be the name of Jesus. Your thoughts will happen, but don't engage them.

In this time, a name or face of a person might come to mind. You may feel conviction of a sin. You may be encouraged to engage with someone you encountered last week. Pay attention to the thought, and when the period of silence is over, take action.

Keep blessing and eating, too!



Luke Stehr

THIS WEEK, TO LISTEN TO GOD I WILL NEED TO:

MY GOALS:

MY RESOURCES:



Brad Echols

SPIRITUAL _____

Listening to God in Prayer:



Listening Prayer:



PRAYER: Scripture invites (and commands) us to talk with God. Being spiritually fit means having a healthy relationship with God and you cannot have a healthy relationship if you're not communicating with Him. Prayer is more than talking to God. It's also about listening! We often share with God about our lives, make our requests known to him, and praise His name, but we struggle to stop, be still, and just listen. Listen to His response. It is in listening that we hear God's direction for our lives and how He will provide for our needs. As you pray this week, work on your listening skills. If you want to be in great spiritual shape, you need to practice moments of silence. Create moments where you just listen to God's instructions for your transformation.



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



So many things in life come at a cost. We know we have to do the work to get the results, but our busyness or laziness can get in the way sometimes. Tara reminds us of six benefits to exercise!



Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____



We are designed to live in community. We are made to be the body of Christ, living life together, trusting that we can do more together than alone. We're not supposed to live as hermits, but in fellowship with the people of God. Ironically though, sometimes church can be the hardest place to show our true selves. Scan to read more.



**THIS WEEK,
I FELT REALLY
SUCCESSFUL IN:**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19







MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

God didn't need to create you. He chose to create you! He created you for his benefit and delight. Bringing enjoyment to God - living for his pleasure - is our primary reason for being. Humanity's highest purpose is to reflect the image of God and declare the glory of God.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with this point:

Q. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

In his best-selling book, The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren agrees that the primary reason we were created is to bring glory to God. He suggests 5 main ways that we can each choose to glorify our Creator:

- by worshipping him
- by loving other Christians
- by becoming like Christ
- by serving others with our gifts
- by telling others about him

In other words, Warren believes we give God glory through worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.

The idea of "glory" in this week's daily Bible readings (Hebrew: kabod; Greek: doxa) refers to the true weight, substance, worth, splendor, honor, and

essence of God that always evokes a positive response. God's glory is unique in all creation!

We gain a sense of God's glory in the following verses.

"All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God" (Psalm 86:9-10).

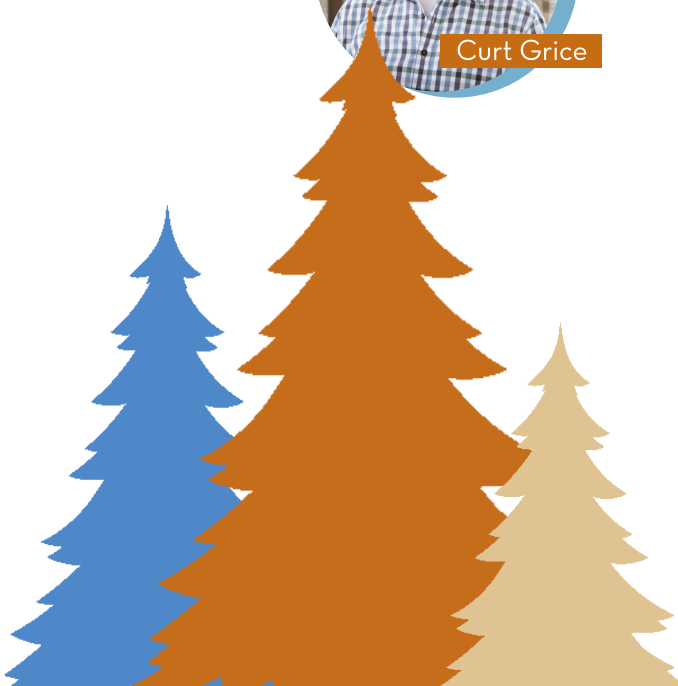
"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isaiah 42:8).

"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (Isaiah 43:6-7).

Part of better health for you during this Winter Challenge may be rediscovering your true purpose. Are you seeking to glorify God with your life... or living for yourself? What needs to change? As you read and reflect on God's glory this week, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into truth and prompt you into action.



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

January 22: Genesis 2:4-18, 21-25: _____

January 23: Psalm 8: _____

January 24: Genesis 2:4-25: _____

January 25: Isaiah 43:1-26: _____

January 26: John 4:1-26: _____

January 27: John 7:25-44: _____

MISSIONAL HABIT 5: LEARN

If we're going to share the good news about Jesus, if we're going to share him as the reason for the hope that we have, then we need to know him.

If God has sent us into the world to live lives that give hope to others, we need to know who Jesus is and what he taught. As Jesus' followers, we believe that he's not only someone we can learn about, but is our resurrected Lord whom we can personally encounter and know as friend.

To do this, we need to spend regular time each week "learning Jesus." To practice this habit, take time to read a chapter or two from one of the Gospels each morning. You might find it easier to build this time into your day by listening to a reading of the Gospels instead. Either way, if we want to tell people about Jesus, we need to know who Jesus is and what he taught. The best way to do that is by reading the Gospels.

As we encounter Jesus through the Gospels and by learning more about Jesus through sermons, books, and lectures, we will become the kind of people who can respond to the questions our friends and neighbors might ask us.

Thinking about the questions we might get asked can cause a degree of anxiety.

In his book Telling a Better Story: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age, Joshua Chatraw says, "How do you become effective at talking about God in a skeptical age? Steep your life in the gospel story. Learn to see everything by

way of the story. Study to see where the story of Christ challenges and overlaps with the dominant assumptions of culture around. By taking every thought captive to Christ and his story, you will grow closer to God, but you will also become the right type of person - a cruciform witness habituated in a pattern of thinking that serves as the foundation for telling the story of Christ in a way that makes sense."

What Chatraw is saying is that by steeping our lives in the story of Christ, and learning to see the whole world through the lens of that story, we can assess and dialogue with our culture's pressing questions and assumptions... not by dominating people with logical arguments, but by showing them a truer, more beautiful story. By baptizing our lives and imaginations in Jesus' story, the way we share Jesus with others will follow Jesus' example of sacrificial love that becomes the basis for all that we do.

So this week, spend time each day reading the Gospels. Add this habit to your weekly habits of listening, eating, and blessing!



Luke Stehr

WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT KEEP YOU FROM LEARNING?

MY GOALS:



Brad Echols

SPIRITUAL _____

Reading for
Application:



Applying
Scripture:



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____

MY RESOURCES:

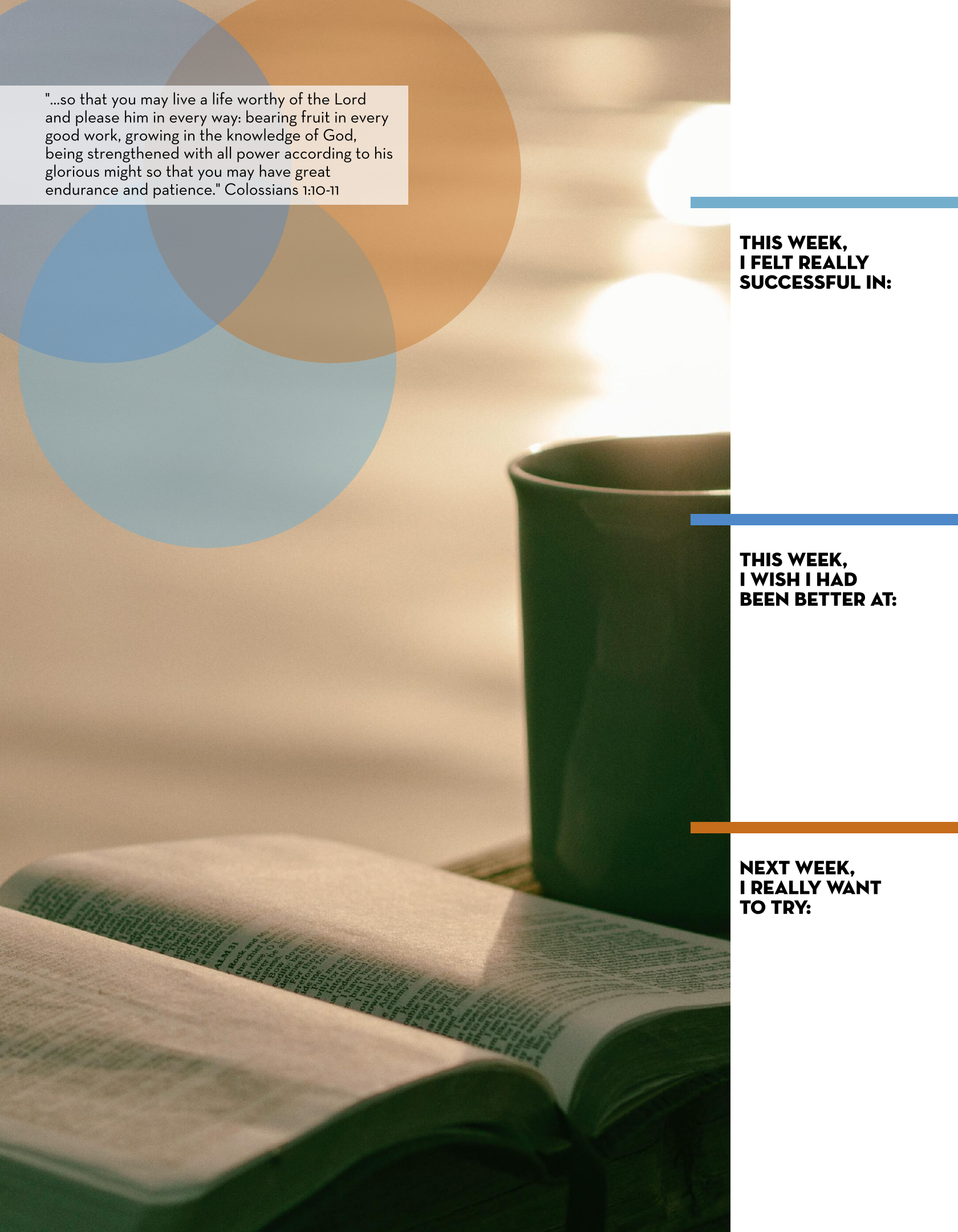
BIBLE STUDY: Spiritual health is achieved as we become more and more like God and take on His character. God's character is revealed through His Word and we take on that character by studying the Bible. Studying the Bible is much more than just reading it. True study involves preparing your heart and mind before you even begin to study, and it involves applying what you learned to how you live your life. The spiritual fitness goal this week is "preparation" and "application." Before you study God's Word, spend intentional and meaningful time preparing your heart and mind by praying and reading the text. After your study time, plan to apply it to your daily life and create a way that you will be held accountable for living out what you have learned.

Running - and even walking - are great ways to get in shape, but it can be challenging to get started. Tara Tomes, our Activities Minister, gives you some tips on how you can start a running or walking program in 2023.



One of the most popular books on emotional health from a Christian perspective is Pete Scazzero's Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. One chapter in this book is entitled "Going Back In Order To Go Forward: Breaking The Power Of The Past." Scazzero addresses the reality that we are all born into a certain family of origin, and for some of us that can lead to a decent amount of "emotional baggage" we carry with us throughout our lives. Read more:





"...so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience." Colossians 1:10-11

**THIS WEEK,
I FELT REALLY
SUCCESSFUL IN:**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**

WEEK 6:
JAN 29
-FEB 4

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

In his book, Broken Signposts: How Christianity Makes Sense of the World, N.T. Wright says, “It is a universal human longing. We all know that things are out of kilter: in the world, in my country, in your country. The instinct for justice runs deep. We all know it. But we all find that ‘putting right’ is difficult.”

Wright claims that John’s gospel depicts a God who cares deeply about justice. He argues that John’s account of the life and ministry of Jesus is, in fact, a book about how the whole world is being put right at last. It tells the story of how the creator God himself is passionate about things being sorted out and what he has done to bring it about.

Our daily Bible readings this week illustrate God’s desire for us to “let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24).

On two occasions, we see Jesus rebuke his accusers for their misunderstanding of true justice.

“Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment” (John 7:34).

“You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me” (John 8:15-16).

The story of the woman caught in adultery is especially insightful. Jesus doesn’t question or excuse the woman’s sin. Rather, he confronts her accusers with their own iniquity and hardness of heart. “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” sounds a lot like “In the same way you judge others, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:1-5).

Wright goes on to say: “One of the beautiful things that distinguishes the Christian idea of justice from others is that it is participatory: we are part of bringing it about. Once Jesus has done what he has to do, he will send the Spirit upon his followers, so that through our witness a new sort of justice will be born.”

As God’s new covenant people, we are “justice bringers.” As Christ’s ambassadors, we declare that God is in the process of putting things right. Through the death, resurrection, and authority of King Jesus, creation and humanity will one day be restored to its original state and intended purpose.

Wright concludes with this statement: “The risen Jesus has won the victory over injustice and now sends his followers to work on the multiple projects of new creation. Justice itself – restorative, healing, life-giving justice – is central to that task.”



Curt Grice



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Read the daily selections and record your thoughts and insights here.

January 29: John 3:19-21: _____

January 30: John 7:1-24: _____

January 31: John 8:1-11: _____

February 1: John 8:12-30: _____

February 2: John 8:31-47: _____

February 3: John 8:48-59: _____

MISSIONAL HABIT 6: SENT

The final habit is to spend time journaling. You can do this daily or at the end of the week. The goal here is not to simply record events that have happened, but to reflect on how God is at work through your eating, through your blessing, and through your times of prayer and of learning Jesus. We firmly believe that God is at work in this world and has sent you into this world as Christ's ambassador. When we journal, we want to reflect on those activities.

We journal for a few reasons:

It helps us process the events of the week. Writing our thoughts down actually helps us in the mental act of processing. Journaling helps us process and then return to our work and habits with intentionality because we begin to see the meaning behind these actions. It helps us process how these habits are shaping us into people whom God has sent.

Journaling helps us make sense of what God is up to. It causes us to deliberately slow down and ask where God is in the midst of work and habits. It forces us to take notice of the ways that God's Kingdom is unfurling throughout the world and throughout our relationships and actions.

It helps us ask better questions. In journaling, we have space to ask if God was at work in a conversation or in blessing a neighbor. The more we

journal, the better our questions become, and the better our questions become, the clearer our answers will be.

Journaling helps us take note of patterns. It gives a way to look back and see how we're developing in discipleship and see how God has been moving in our lives. Journaling gives a rearview mirror through which we can begin to see what God has been up to in our lives.

Ultimately, we want to live into a full awareness of how God is sending us into the world and propelling us into redemptive and reconciling relationships with the people around us. As we grow in this habit, we will grow in awareness of our identity as people whom God has sent into the world.

You are being sent into the lives of people around you as a representative of Christ, and our hope is that you will continue to practice the habits and continue to live a life that sends you out into the community to engage people in loving acts of generosity and hospitality that provide space for conversations about Jesus.



Luke Stehr

HOW HAVE YOU SEEN GOD SEND YOU THROUGH THE HABITS:



Brad Echols

MY GOALS:

SPIRITUAL _____

Share the Gospel:



Write Your Story:



MY RESOURCES:

EVANGELISM: Sharing the Gospel can be a difficult and even scary proposition, but if we're going to be spiritually healthy, we must be faithful to fulfill the Great Commission. Many of the stories I have heard about people sharing their faith are the most meaningful and impactful spiritual moments they have in their lives. So why don't more people share their faith? It may be lack of intentionality, not sensing the opportunities provided, or lack of confidence. This week your challenge is to make time to talk with God and plan how you will share your faith with someone. Spend time thinking about your story, how God has changed your life, and how that change might benefit someone else's life.



Tara Tomes

PHYSICAL _____



Sometimes the hardest part about developing a new exercise plan is just starting! Tara gives us some tips for getting off the couch in 2023 and starting a new program.

Have a question? Email her at tara.tomes@fbca.org.




Katy Reed Hodges

EMOTIONAL _____

As we wrap up this Winter Challenge, there are several resources our church offers that may be helpful as you consider how to apply all that we've studied. Based on the previous weeks' topics, could God be inviting you to participate in any of these ministries in order to be a more vibrant, healthier person? Check out our resources by scanning this code:





"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness... and knowledge...and self-control... and perseverance... and godliness...and love." 2 Peter 1:3-7

**THIS WEEK,
I FELT REALLY
SUCCESSFUL IN:**

**THIS WEEK,
I WISH I HAD
BEEN BETTER AT:**

**NEXT WEEK,
I REALLY WANT
TO TRY:**



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