**Getting in Shape DAY 27**

**Verse of the day*: Mark 8:35-36 35For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? (NIV)***

How good of shape do you think you are in?  Could you enter a race or maybe the more important question to ask should be, could you finish a race if you entered it? I don’t know what the exact statistics are, but we hear it all the time: people are overweight, have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and/or diabetes. For the most part this country is not in very good health. The point is that to get in shape it will take effort and commitment on your part. There is no way that you would ever enter a race or a marathon without training and getting in shape first. For those of you who do train and exercise to compete in different competitions or to just stay in shape, you know how hard it is and the commitment it takes to keep a routine going, especially given all the demands that life seems to throw at us every day. You must make exercise a priority or it won’t happen. Well, here is the million-dollar question or better yet here is the eternal question for all of us. What are you doing when it comes to keeping your heart, mind and soul in shape? Are you aware that ***“your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” 1 Corinthians 6:19.*** And by not taking care of our body or temple (that God has given us), we are dishonoring the Lord. But something that I believe is even more dishonoring to the Lord than lack of physical exercise is when we don’t exercise our heart, mind and soul through prayer, reading God’s Word, fellowshipping and worshipping together or serving and helping others who are in need. When life comes to an end and we sit before the Lord He won’t ask how many miles we can run or ride a bike, how high we can jump or climb, how much we can bench press or how many laps we can swim.  He will ask things like “what have you done to know Me better, when did you worship and fellowship with Me and other believers, why didn’t you call and talk with me, do you know My Son”? You see it doesn’t make any difference how good of shape we are in physically if our heart, mind, and soul are out of shape and out of touch with the Lord. Look at today’s verse again ***Mark 8:35-36 35For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*** So, what are you doing to get yourself in shape for God’s Race for your Heavenly Home?

**“ASAP” DAY 28**

**Verse of the day: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-*18   Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)***

We have all received one of those invitations to some event, party, meeting or something else asking us to respond “ASAP” as to whether we plan on attending and if so how many will be joining us. As I think about this acronym “ASAP” that we all have come to understand to mean “AS Soon As Possible”, I would like to challenge you to reflect on a different meaning --to consider using this acronym in a new way. I truly believe with all my heart if we will start using “ASAP” considering this new meaning and apply it to everything we do in life, whether big or small it could change our life and those around us in ways we never thought possible. So what is this new meaning for “ASAP” that I believe could be so powerful in the hands of God’s people? **“Always Say A Prayer”** We are reminded in today’s scripture and many other scriptures like: ***Ephesians 6:18 ‘18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people’*** this type of prayer is not something we do just when we feel like it. We are called to **“*pray continually”*** and “***on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.***   For me personally when I involve and include the Lord in things prior to actually doing them on my own-it always turns out better. As I think back over my life, especially before I truly gave my heart to the Lord, there has been more times than not that I have failed to pray prior to doing something on my own. It’s only by the power of God’s Prevenient Grace of Love and Mercy that He spared me from untold harm and misery. So here is my prayer for you this week:  **“ASAP” “ASAP” A**s **S**oon **A**s **P**ossible--**A**lways **S**ay **A** **P**rayer. Each time you think about the acronym **“ASAP”** let it remind you to **“*pray continually”*** and “***on all occasions”*** regardless of whether you’re doing something big or small. Your ASAP to God is just like sending a response back to someone who requested an ASAP to their event. By always saying a prayer before doing something on your own God can help you plan, arrange, and orchestrate your life in a way that is pleasing to Him.

**“It’s As Good As Done” DAY 29**

**Verse of the day*: 1 Thessalonians 5: 23-24 23-24May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he’ll do it! (The Message)***

Do you know anyone who you can always depend on to keep their word? Someone that tells you something and once they say it you can count on it to be “**As Good As Done**” It seems as if these kinds of people are becoming fewer and fewer now-a-days. This lack of following through on your word probably happens more in our own families. Now don’t get me wrong, there are times when plans and promises have to be changed due to unforeseen circumstances but when the pattern keeps repeating itself over and over again and excuses become the norm versus a real need that comes up, I feel it can devalue and diminish our relationships with others. But there is One Person we can always count on to keep His word. He has never broken a promised, missed out on opportunities, dropped the ball, forgotten something or missed an appointment and His name is Jesus Christ. And as we see in today’s scripture, He is completely dependable. When He makes a promise or says He will do something you can count on it to be **“As good as done”**. You see God cannot lie ***Hebrews 6:18 ….it is impossible for God to lie, (NIV)*** So, how are you doing at keeping your word? Do you continually use a lot of excuses to try and justify your actions? Would your family or anyone else describe you or say ***“It’s as good as done”*** once you give your word? If the answers to any of these questions are not what you would like to hear, why not ask the Lord to help you change your character and your heart to reflect the image of Christ.  After all who doesn’t what to be known as someone that people remember and say ***“It’s as good as done”*** “you can count on him to keep his word.

**A Cone of Shame DAY 30**

**Verse for the day: *Romans 5:18 Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. (NLT)***

Several years back before we lost our two-year-old German Shepard mix my wife happened to notice a bloody spot on Kody’s foot, so we made an appointment with the vet to have it checked out. They determined it was a non-cancerous cyst and the decision was made to have it removed. When I went to pick Kody up later in the day, I had to wait for a short time while they rewrapped his leg because he had decided to chew off his first bandage. Well, needless to say, when they brought him out to me - guess what he had around his head. Yep! You got it, the big cone of shame to prevent him from having the ability to chew or lick the bandage which protected his stitches. As I watched Kody enter the room his head was hung low, he was whimpering, and you could tell his whole demeanor had changed from what his normal personality. At every turn, door, obstacle, or anything he came close to, the cone of shame was there to remind him of his shame and consequently affected everything he tried to do. The longer I watched Kody the more it made me think of how satan has used a cone of shame on so many people to affect their lives and how they see themselves or how they think others might see them. There is no doubt that God uses a sense of shame or guilty feeling in us as a way to bring us back to Him and remind us who we are in Him. But satan uses a cone of shame as a way to drive us away from the Cross and the one Person that can help us get past the cone of shame. A cone of shame can last a lifetime even if it's been physically removed, the memories and hurt left behind can hauntsome people till the day they die. But there is Good News as we see in today’s scripture and in ***Romans 8:1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*** While The Lord might allow us to feel and experience shame and guilt it’s meant to drive us towards the Cross to seek forgiveness and repentance for whatever caused the shame. We've all experienced those moments in our life like Kody where we find a cone of shame and guilt around our head for everyone to see. The question is what will you do with it? Will it drive you closer to The Lord or further way? Will you use it as an excuse to hide, avoid, lash out or attack someone or a way to get back on track with God's plan for your life? While it may be easier to remove, hide or even except the physical or outer cone of shame that others might see you wearing. The emotional and inward pain, guilt, and shame it leaves behind can haunt people for a lifetime. As human beings there is no one that has or ever will live on this earth that has suffered more shame than Christ as He hung on a cross to take upon Himself our shame and guilt and pay the penalty for our sins, even though He was without sin. If you remember nothing else about this devotion, remember this. ***While satan knows your name he calls and reminds you of your shame, but as for Jesus while He knows your shame, He calls you by your name.*** So who's voice are you listening to? The voice of shame or the Voice of Glory. ***John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.***

**I Don’t Understand DAY 31**

**Romans 7: 15-20** **15 “For what I am doing, I do not understand 16 If then, I do what I will not to do,……. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18…………………. 19For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”.**

Do you feel this verse sums up your life in a nutshell, boy! I sure do at times. When I know what’s right and how God wants me to react or respond in different situations I’ve done just the opposite. You’d think after several opportunities where the same situations came again, I would get it right the first time. But, as we read in the scripture today, the problem is “SIN dwelling in us” and what is at the center of sin “I” that right “ME” “MYSELF” and “I”. We can get so caught up in what we want we forget to put God first, family second, and then others before ourselves. But here is the good news about all of this as God’s word tells us that **“the Spirit who lives in us is greater than the spirit who lives in the world”** **1 John 4: 4** And in **Romans 8: 1** we are told **“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus “**. Oh! people of God be encouraged for we know Who wins in the end; while the battles go on let us not forget that our victory is in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Praise be to God!!

**Are You Out of Gas DAY 32**

**Verse of the day*: John 6:35 Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (NLT)***

Do you ever have those days when you feel like you’re out of gas, used up, just nothing left in the old gas tank and all you want to do is nothing, naught, zero, zilch?

Then there are those times I can feel emotionally drained. For me when those times happen, I usually just shut down and try to avoid whatever might be going on. You know just ride out the storm and wait till things calm down or clear up before engaging again. But by not dealing with, or facing whatever emotions I might be feeling, if I am not careful this can quickly empty my emotionally fuel tank. Even to the point that I run out of gas, and it drains my energy or desire to connect with anyone. And this brings us to what I feel is the most critical fuel tank of all, our spiritual fuel tank. If this fuel tank is not properly maintained and regularly refueled, it will affect everything else in your life. And this is where real warfare takes place. Satan knows if he can drain your spiritual fuel tank, he can control all the other fuel tanks in your life. He doesn’t even have to drain your fuel tank completely dry to have an impact on your life. He knows exactly how much to drain out of your tank to get you to comprise your walk with God. And there are times he might even allow you to think your tank is full just to distract you or tempt you to go down a different path than God had planned for you.  I saw a sign the other day that said “Adversity is a test of our faith - Prosperity is a test of our integrity” So, what are you doing to keep your fuel tanks full and ready? Every day we are under attack and that’s why I say it’s warfare. We must be ready and know how to keep refreshing and refilling our physical, emotional, and especially our spiritual fuel tanks every day. I pray you will take some time today to stop by God fueling stations. Why not start at His Prayer station. Maybe you need to ask the Lord to remove all that old junk fuel in your tank and replace it with a new fuel known as His Holy Spirit. Then continue to refresh and refuel your new tank through daily prayer and His Holy Word called the Bible. Remember garbage in garbage out, so get rid of all that old junk that has kept you from drawing closer to the Lord. When you allow the Lord to be your fuel source, I think you will find your life will run much smoother, be more peaceful and above all else He will provide you just the right amount of fuel to get you Home. Regardless of where you might be right now in your life, when you depend on the Lord, He will never allow you to **“*be hungry again”*** and you ***“will never be thirsty”.*** He won’t allow you to run out of gas before you get Home.

**Help He’s Lost DAY 33**

**Verse of the day*: Luke 15: 3-7******3Then Jesus told them this parable: 4“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.***  ***(*NIV)**

Have you ever gotten lost or had a family member or friend get lost while out hunting, hiking or while spending time in the great outdoors? Or how about while driving somewhere you’ve gotten so lost you felt a sense of panic coming upon you? Or how about waiting for someone to show up at your house and it’s snowing outside and they’re several hours late and you haven’t heard from them? The more I think about being lost or hearing stories of people becoming physically lost and the effort put forth to find them, the more I wonder why we as Christian don’t have the same urgency, resolve, determination and sense of priority to find the Spiritually lost. Why is it that it seems we will call everyone we know, even strangers we don’t know that are experts in search and rescue when someone we love or care about gets physically lost, and yet we all have family members, friends, co-workers all around us every day who are Spiritually lost and separated from the Lord and we don’t even take the time to talk to them or try and help them find their way Home Spiritually? Many of them don’t even realize they are lost or off track. Like the story of 14-year-old Luke, who got lost while hunting with his dad. Before Luke realized he was even lost he was so far off track there was no way he was going to get back to the pick-up on his own. It took people who cared enough about his life and were willing to go out of their way to help find and bring him home. While only one person ended up finding him it took a team effort of everyone involved to narrow down the search area in order to find Luke. His dad would never have found him on his own or at best it would have been many hours or possibly even days later before finding him and by then who knows what kind of condition Luke might have been in or if he would have even be alive. Do you know someone who is Spiritually Lost? What’s keeping you from having the same urgency, resolve, determination and a sense of priority as you would if that person was physically lost and wanting to help them find their way home? Bottom line it takes all of us working together to help bring the lost to the Lord. Just like in finding Luke it took a team of caring people coming together, putting Luke as their number one priority, in order to help bring him back home. And the same is true for the Spiritually lost it will take the entire Body of Christ working together to help bring the lost to Christ. Some will sow and some will reap but regardless which you do just remember we are all called to share the Good News of Christ to those who are lost.  ***John 4:37-38 37Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. 38I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”***

**The Heart of the Matter DAY 34**

**Verses of the day: Ezekiel 36: 26-29 “26I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put my Spirit in you………..28………….you will be my people and I will be your God. 29I will save you from all your uncleanness.**

Before I went on my “Walk to Emmaus” weekend I had not truly understood or given my heart and life totally to God. Oh, I knew Him and was aware that He wanted me to develop a closer relationship with Him, but pride, fear and selfishness keep me from that. But, during my walk God took the longest walk in my life, but it was the shortest walk in distance He ever took. You see He only move 18” that weekend from my head to my heart. There it is again the heart and what a difference it has made in my life. Today’s verse is one of the first verses God revealed to me when I returned home **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you”** WOW! It is amazing what happens when you get a new heart that has been softened and molded by God and not the world. I don’t know where you are in your walk with the Lord today, but I pray you will allow God to search your heart and remove those hardened stones/places in your life. Maybe its anger, fear, guilt, past hurts, misguided relationships, you name the stones. Whatever it is God will remove them and give you a new heart if you will only ask Him to. So, don’t wait and say Oh! “Someday” or “If Only” as it might be too late as “Someday” or “If Only” may never come. Let the Lord mold and shape your heart today and allow Him to take that 18” walk in your life I guarantee it will be the best decision you ever make

**Buffet and Smorgasbord DAY 35**

**Verse of the day: *Joshua 24:15 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (NIV)***

Why is it that a “*solid majority of the people personalize religion with little regard for the need to submit themselves to any kind of accountability or authority. In essence, everyone does what is right in their eyes”****\*.*** This is not a new concept as we see in ***Judges 17:6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*** Ever since Adam and Eve sinned and fell out of favor from God and were banned from the Garden of Eden, mankind has been trying to play God.   *“As a result, many people treat religion more like a hobby. It's a free-flowing, do-as-you-please, spiritual smorgasbord where they pick and choose what they want, when they want it. A little dab of truth here, a little dab there. But never too much truth. As someone has said, "God created man in His own image; then man returned the favor."* ***\**** *It is time for us as Christians to clean up our own house, to let the Bible's truth become not just our standard for belief but also our standard of behavior, both personally and in our families. Then we must take it a step further, calling those around us to the good news of Jesus Christ and exhorting those who know Him to internalize, apply and proclaim His life-giving message.”***\* \***(*Quoted from Family Life Today devotion*) **1 *Thessalonians 5: 1-3*** ***Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*** So, what are you doing to exhort the Good News of Jesus Christ? Are you trying to create God in your image or are you allowing the image of Christ to shine through you. Do you only choose and pick those spiritual things you want and like, similar to a going through your favor smorgasbord or buffet line? Is your relationship with Christ a hobby or a way of life?  I pray you will allow the Bible's truth to become not just your standard for belief but also your standard of behavior, both personally and in your family. We must proclaim and share the Good News of Christ Lifesaving message with others.  Start today because when Christ returns there will be no more second chances-only those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior over their lives will be able to feast at His banquet table. So, until we reach our Heavenly Home let’s not treat God’s Word like a buffet or smorgasbord line where we pick and choose only those things we want to obey or like, but let us depend, honor, and obey every Word. The future of our families and our nation depends on it.

**Delayed for Now DAY 36**

**Verse for the day: 2 Samuel 22:31-*33 “God’s way is perfect. All the Lord’s promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. 32For who is God except the Lord? Who but our God is a solid rock?
33God is my strong fortress, and he makes my way perfect.***

I think God works in our lives at times in disruptive ways. He puts delays in our plans, our dreams, and our desires and throughout our lives as a way to keep us in check and keep us safe. I truly believe if God allowed us to just plow through life and never run into delays we would miss out on so much or hurt ourselves in some ways. The problem is that in this fast-paced world of ours where you can get almost everything at a touch of a key stroke or push of a button the words “delay”, “not right now” or “be patient” are not something most people want to hear. There is no doubt that delays can be frustrating especially when we don't see them from God's point of view. But I can guarantee if God is behind the delay, it means He has something much better He wants to give you, teach you or use you for than your originally planned. All we have to do is pay attention and be aware of what God is trying to show us and teach us through the delays. The problem is most people never see delays as a blessing from God. But ask someone who got delayed and later found out there was a huge car pileup on an interstate, the plane they were supposed to be on crashed, or someone was shot at an event they were supposed to be at. Ask them if they are sorry, they were delayed. So, the next time you get delayed why not find a way to praise the Lord by helping to bring a sense of peace to someone who might be struggling with the delay? Who knows, the next delay might just be the one that saves your life or helps you to re-prioritize what's really important in life. Or maybe just maybe God has someone He wants you to talk with while you wait. If nothing else by staying calm and using the delay as an opportunity to speak and pray with God or read His word you might save a few gray hairs or even an ulcer down the road.  After all, ***“God’s way is perfect”*** so allow Him to be your **“*strong fortress”*** and to make your ***“way perfect”.***

**Redeemed & Forgiven DAY 37**

**Verse of the day*: Ephesians 1: 3-10 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.***  ***(NIV)***

How many of you struggle with something from your past? Things that you did or did not do that keep you from being all you want to be and more importantly all God wants you to be. You just can’t seem to get beyond your past. You still see yourself as unworthy, unfit, or unusable. I love the song “Redeemed” sung by Big Daddy Weave. Here are some of the words: *Seems like all I can see was the struggle, Haunted by ghosts that lived in my past, Bound up in shackles of all my failures, Wondering how long is this gonna last, Then you look at this prisoner and say to me, "son stop fighting a fight that's already been won" Chorus 2nd, All my life I have been called unworthy, Named by the voice of my shame and regret, But when I hear you, whisper "child lift up your head", I remember oh God you're not done with me yet, Chorus 3rd, Because I don't have to be the old man inside of me, 'cause his day is long dead and gone because, I've got a new name , a new life I'm not the same, and a hope that will carry me home, Chorus, I am redeemed , you set me free, So I'll shake off these heavy chains and, Wipe away every stain, Cause I'm not who I used to be, “*final verse” *I am redeemed you set me free So I'll shake off these heavy chains and, And wipe away every stain, Now I'm not who I used to be, Oh God I'm not who I used to be, Jesus I'm not who I used to be, 'Cause I am redeemed, Thank God redeemed!”* So instead of living with regrets and feelings of being unworthy caused by actions you’re currently doing or anything else you might have done in your past, claim today’s scripture found in ***Ephesians 1:7 “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*”** and as the song says: "son stop fighting a fight that's already been won” because you have been ***“Redeemed”*** you have been **“Set Free”.**

**Guilty as Charged DAY 38**

**Acts 5:28-29 *28 “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!.....*** **(*NIV)***

You may or may not have ever been in a court of law before as a victim, an accused or any other part of the judicial system. But there is one thing for certain - one day we will all stand before God’s Judgment seat.   ***2 Corinthians 5:10 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (NIV)*** You see whether you like it or not you will stand before the Lord one day and you will be asked to account for your life. This is true for all regardless of whether you consider yourself to be a Christian or not and regardless of whether you believe that Jesus is the only way back to the God as we see in ***John 14:6 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me***. On that judgment day ***“It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’” Romans 14:11(NIV)*** Here is the million-dollar question for the day or even more importantly the eternal question for the day. If you were before a court of your peers accused of being a Christian-a follower of Christ like Peter and the other apostles were. Would there be enough evidence to find you “Guilty as Charged”? And even more importantly than your peers would the Lord find enough evidence to say ***“Well done, good and faithful servant! …. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Matthew 25:21 (NIV)*** Being a follower of Christ is not always easy as we see in the rest of today’s scripture reading as the apostles were ***“flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus” Acts 5:40*** But the apostles didn’t stop. They kept building more evidence against themselves as we see in ***Acts 5:41-42 “ 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted”*** *(Guilty as Charged)* ***“worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.”*** So, what are you doing today to build a case for or against being found “Guilty as Charged” of being a believer and follower of Christ? Is the evidence clear and the verdict simple and easy to determine that you are a follower of Christ, or would it be hard to find any evidence to support your claim of being a Christian?

**Secret Weapon DAY 39**

**Verse of the day*: 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (NIV)***

Did you know you have a secret weapon when it comes to fighting your biggest adversary, the devil? This weapon could require the use of knees but even when the knees are not used it can still be one of the most powerful weapons you will ever use in your life. Satan tries his best to limit your use of this weapon because he knows when it is used it limits his power and ability here on earth. Satan will try to distract us every way possible to limit us using this tool. He will get us busy with kids, work, hobbies, and life in general. He can even use church activities to distract us away from using this weapon during our personal and quiet time at home. He makes us tired, confused and upset or mad at times, even to the point that we can misuse this weapon in ways it was never intended for.   But in the right hands and a humble heart this weapon can be the most powerful weapon known to mankind. Well, if you haven’t figured out what this weapon is yet?...... **It’s Prayer!**  ***James 5:13-16 13Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (NIV)*** . How long has it been since you used prayer against your adversary? Do you only use prayer as a gift request and not as a weapon to fight spiritual warfare? There is no other weapon that has the power that prayers can provide. It is our secret weapon for fighting spiritual warfare and no other weapon here on earth can or ever will replace this gift from God.

**Obstacles or Opportunities DAY 40**

**Verse for the da**y: ***Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (NIV)***

What is it about the word obstacle that can cause so many different emotions in us humans? Those emotions can range from fear to excitement and enjoyment. I believe fear of obstacles can occur due to several factors, like dealing with the unknown, having to move out of one’s comfort zone or doing something you've never done before in order to keep going. On the other hand, the word obstacle can bring a sense of excitement and joy to someone when it's associated with having fun, like going to an obstacle course at an amusement park. But regardless of how the word obstacle is used it usually refers to some kind of barrier, obstruction or roadblock which causes someone to have to change their plans in order to get past or around whatever is in the way and those obstacles can be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. As Christians we should not see barriers, obstructions or roadblocks as obstacles but as opportunities in life which can help us grow in our faith and love for the Lord. Throughout my life I have had many things that I thought to be obstacles but as my trust and faith in the Lord has grown, I now see obstacles as opportunities to grow even deeper in my trust and faith in The Lord. Has that been easy to do? Not always, there are still times my flesh gets in the way but each time I put my trust in the Lord and lean on Him instead of trying to do things on my own, I realize how much He loves me and how His ways are always better than my ways***.* Isaiah55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. 9“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”.**

The next time you are facing an obstacle I pray you will see it as an opportunity to grow in your trust and faith in The Lord instead of just being another barrier, obstruction or roadblock. You have heard me quote this saying from Oswald Chambers many times and I will say it again "God doesn’t give us overcoming life, He gives us life as we overcome." So, let’s change our vocabulary and way of thinking in which the word obstacle has something to do with fun instead of something that creates a sense of fear or panic.  Let’s claim ***Proverbs 3: 5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight,*** *b*ecause nothing is impossible for the Lord.

**Pressing On BONUS DAY 41**

 **Verse of the day: *Philippians 3:13-14 13Brothers 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, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (NIV)***

Living a Christian life is not always easy. We are continually being tempted, tested, compared and put under a microscope by the world to see how we will respond and react to different situations in our lives. Being a Christian is a lot like trying to learn to ride a bike when you were little. You start out with training wheels to help you stay upright. But even with training wheels you crash and fall from time to time. But little by little as you press on you gain more confidence, till one day you ask to have the training wheels removed because you realize they are restricting you from doing more. Once the training wheels are gone a new learning process starts and you find yourself with a few cuts and scrapes as you pick yourself up and continue to press on. As you press on it's as if one day someone turns on a light switch and you find yourself peddling away like you have been riding for years. But even after you have mastered the art of bike riding it doesn't mean you will never crash again.  You see regardless of what you're doing in life there will be times when life comes crashing in on you. Whether you have training wheels on or you’re a seasoned professional there will be times you have to press on in order to get past whatever might be happening in your life. I pray whatever you might be going through right now that you will "Press On" knowing there is a God in Heaven Who knows exactly what you’re going through and wants to help you get through your situation. As a matter of fact, what might seem like an underserved situation might just be a blessing in disguise. Just like this case were our friend who was seriously injured in this accident. While being treated for his injuries it was discovered he had a tumor in one of his kidneys and an aneurism in his heart. If the aneurism had ruptured, they said he would have been dead before he hit the floor. So as bad as the accident and injuries might appear they were a blessing in disguise as neither the tumor or the aneurism probably wouldn't have been found till much later in which case it may have been too late to do anything about them. In all things good or bad, hard or fun, certainty or uncertainty let's remember to "Press On" toward the prize that awaits us. And remember ***"With God all things are possible" Matthew 19:26*** so keep on pressing on and just like trying to learn to ride a bike - the rewards and blessings come after you get back up and Press On.

**Spending Versus Investing BONUS DAY 42**

**Verse of the day: Titus 3:3-8 *3At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. (NIV)***

The older I got the concept of spending versus investing came to mean a lot more to me. The closer I got to retirement the more I wished I had done a lot more investing and a lot less spending. As I think about this concept of spending vs. investing, it not only applies to our financial planning it also applies to all aspects of our lives. Jesus invested His entire life here on this earth for one moment on a cross so we could be saved. The time Jesus spent on this earth especially the last three years of His life was invested in people. It wasn’t about programs, religious nonsense or earning status but about investing in people and building a relationship in which others would want to follow Him. We can spend a lifetime trying to earn, buy, work or justify our way to Heaven and never receive the free gift of Salvation. No matter how much time, money or effort you spend trying to earn your way to Heaven won’t get you there. Only through investing in a relationship with Jesus Christ and accepting Him as Lord and Savior over your life will you be able to receive what Christ invested His entire life for and gave you on the cross- the gift of Salvation! Are you spending more than you’re investing when it comes to eternal things?  What are you doing to invest in your relationship with your Master? Will you hear Him say: ***‘Well done, my good and faithful servant!*** Or ***‘You wicked and lazy servant!*** You have a choice when it comes to spending and investing whether it’s financial, material or Spiritual things so I pray you choose wisely.

**Standing Firm BONUS DAY 43**

**Verse of the day*: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 16May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.***  ***(NIV)***

Have you ever thought what it means to stand firm? There can be many kinds of standing firm in life, depending on what you might be talking about. But, when life gets tough and things don’t seem to make sense, we must stand firm and hold fast to what God has already done for us, in us and through us. Sometimes that can be pretty hard to do when you feel like you are under attack, all alone, or feel like maybe God has even forgotten about you or has not heard your prayers. But that’s when we must trust in a God who is all knowing, all powerful and Who loves us more than we could ever imagine or hope for. I don’t always know or understand why things happen the way they do, but I have learned to stand firm and hold fast to the One who does know and Who cares about me more than anyone else***. Jeremiah 29: 10-11 This is what the Lord says: “….I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*** You see, when things don’t seem to make sense and you can’t understand or seem to see any light in the darkness, remember God has a plan.  He has promised to bring you back to the place where you came to truly know and love Him and to bring you to an even better place that He has already prepared for you. So, regardless of what you might be going through right now whether its work related, something personal, a family matter or anything else, stand firm in the Lord and He will meet you there and lead and guide you through whatever you’re dealing with one step at a time. I know for me personally when I look back on my darkest, hardest, loneliest, weakest and most difficult moments in life the Lord has always been there even when it seemed no one else was. And the more I learn to trust the Lord especially in those moments the more peace, the more comfort, the more discernment and wisdom I find to stand firm and to hold on to God’s Truth. The Lord is my Firm Foundation upon which I stand.