



CITY ROOTS

LET'S PRAY

31-Day Prayer Journey

*Cultivating Gospel Presence for
Generations*

Lord, hear our prayers.

Dear City Church,

Thank you for coming alongside us in prayer over this next month. What a joy it is to meditate on Scripture and come before the Lord with gratitude, praise, adoration, supplications, and confession together as one body. May this time be edifying and bring us closer to the Lord, molding our hearts to become more like Christ's and serving as a way to encourage one another in prayer. We are excited and expectant for the way the Lord will grow us spiritually and prepare us for the way He allows us to participate in His kingdom right in downtown Gainesville (and beyond)!

*Shalom,
The Prayer Team*

Quick Overview of the Prayer Guide

Each day has its own entry which will include:

- Scripture passage (ESV translation)
- Section of observations and/or exhortation
- Prayer

Use this to guide your own time with the Lord or as a way to develop the spiritual discipline of prayer and scripture reading on a more consistent basis.

A special thanks to the Prayer Team, City Roots Leadership Team, our pastors, and all who contributed journal entries for the creation of this prayer journey.

DAY 1

To kick off the 31-day prayer journey, read **Ephesians 3:10-21**. Much of this initiative is influenced by this passage. You will notice some collection of the following verses frequently referenced throughout the City Roots Project.

Take a moment to jot down or think through some observations from the passage.

¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:10-21

We are the church and through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known (v10)! Through Christ, we can access His eternal purposes and have confidence through our faith in him. Purchasing our building is much more than just owning a space, this can provide new ways for us to make Him known and to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit so that Christ may dwell in not just our hearts, but also the hearts of generations to come!

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, we ask that you reveal to us your purposes and how we each play a role in that during this season. May we draw near to you in obedience and bring you honor and glory and praise! Amen.

DAY 2

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

What a beautiful picture Luke illustrates in Acts 2 of fellowship among believers. Each verse depicts specific characteristics and practices of followers of Christ, including devotion to the apostles' teaching, sharing meals together, praying, radical generosity, and praising God. Verse 47 also points out that "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" – what an incredible thing, more souls becoming part of the Kingdom of God!

Our Community Groups at City Church already foster this type of Christian fellowship but imagine how God could use our space to bless our neighbors and each other! By having a permanent downtown location, City Church could be even more accessible for various expressions of fellowship and have the space to accommodate believers who have yet to become part of the body of Christ.

Prayer Prompt:

Father God, would your Spirit urge us to live out the picture of fellowship in Acts 2. Would we devote ourselves to the Gospel teachings, break bread together, pray earnestly, and live radically generous lives. Lord, would you add daily to the number those who are saved here in Gainesville and use us as your vessels. Amen.

DAY 3

Worship

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever....

Revelation 4:9-10a

The books of Revelation 4 and 5 are about the astounding glory of God as the apostle John sees, in a vision, the heavenly throne room. He describes the heavenly worshipers as they acknowledge God's infinite worth and glory and his absolute authority over all created things.

It has always been intriguing to me that the elders do not simply get down on one knee or just bow their heads or begrudgingly lower themselves but that they *fall* before God's presence. Would that we would be so overcome when contemplating God's infinite majesty. Would that, as we plan and prepare for City Roots, we would remember whom we serve.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Lord God our Father “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11 ESV) Thank you that even though You are Almighty God, amazingly because of Jesus You call us Your children and we can come bring our requests to You without fear.

DAY 4

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Psalm 127:1

Oftentimes it's so easy to get caught up in the what and the how of life – work, projects, day-to-day responsibilities, taking care of others – and lose sight of why we do what we do and for whom we do what we get to do. When thinking about the exciting opportunities ahead with having a permanent space downtown, let us not lose sight of the LORD and His sovereignty, and as Solomon says in the opening of this song of ascents, “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

Let's make room for the LORD to build this house, continue to build our church, and watch over Gainesville! Would we as a church body, submit to Him in faith knowing that He can and will do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we come to you recognizing that if we build our church in our own strength, out of our own power and vision, we will labor in vain. Lord, we come to you with open hands, open hearts, and open minds, ready to be used by you and to be co-laborers in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. We ask for Your will to be done as we faithfully work towards having a permanent space that can be used for your glory within our city and beyond!

Lord, may we find rest, peace, and assurance in you. Knowing that you will see this through to completion if this is in accordance with your will! In Christ's name, Amen.

DAY 5

“And he said to [the Lord], ‘If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.’”

Exodus 33:15

It’s often difficult, even for longtime believers, to discern between the will of God and one’s own desires. It is still more difficult to obey God’s will when the two do not align. But God reveals to us time and time again, through doubt, through heartbreak, through suffering, that his desires are what’s best for us. And so, the people of God may boldly proclaim, as Moses did, that we will not go where the Lord’s presence does not lead. This may defy conventional wisdom or secular expectations, but we can do so in the confidence that only comes with faith in God.

As our pastors make significant decisions for the future of our church body, let us pray that they may have the peace, confidence, and boldness necessary to follow the prompting of the Spirit. May our feet never leave the path that our Lord’s presence has illuminated for us.

Prayer Prompt:

Father, we pray on behalf of our pastors and staff as they follow Your guidance in the next steps our church is taking. Among the many voices that call out to them, we pray that Yours is loudest. Among the many expectations that surround them, we pray that You are the only one they obey. Give them peace and confidence to act according to Your Spirit.

No matter what difficulty or uncertainty may befall us, remind us that You’ve never failed. You have left us without any excuse but to believe, and to follow wherever You go. Lord, may we never be found where Your presence is not.

DAY 6

Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Acts 16:34

The conversion story of the Philippian jailer is truly spectacular (Acts 16:25-40). Here is a man that in one moment was about to kill himself because he thought all the prisoners he was to oversee had escaped, to believing in Jesus and being baptized and then welcoming Paul and Silas into his home—two of the very prisoners who were supposed to be under his watch. What an incredible turn of events!

“And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.” May we, like that Philippian jailer, rejoice in what the Lord has done! May we recognize the stark difference in what life would be like without Jesus versus life to the full provided through Jesus. Oh, that the Lord would let the joy of knowing him overflow in us, leading us to radically serve others and welcoming those around us into our church building and our own homes.

Prayer Prompt:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy...” (Psalm 103:2-4)

Dear Lord, we ask that you help us more fully understand what you have done for us. May the love you have for us and the joy of knowing you overflow in our hearts and lead us to be hospitable to those around us.

DAY 7

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. ⁸It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. ⁹Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; ¹⁰then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Proverbs 3:5-10

When we reflect on this set of verses in this moment of our lives, we are brought to joy and extreme gratitude—because we’re seeing these truths manifest themselves in such magnificent ways here in downtown Gainesville. And this is our hope for each of us, as we press into trusting, believing and acting out these promises and calls to serve and honor our Lord and invest in our city.

So re-read this passage and now let’s look at verse nine. In another translation, the word “substance” was used instead of “wealth”. Isn’t this interesting? (see KJV and NRSV) What would this also mean in addition to the “wealth” idea using our modern interpretation of “substance”? And, isn’t “wealth” also measured in other ways than just monetary value? The point we see in this is that perhaps our money can be considered just as easy to give as our time or our attention. But therein lies the grander question: Do we have an easy time giving our time, our attention and lastly, our wealth? If our heart tells us no for any of these, perhaps that’s where we can ask God for guidance in this matter. Additionally, we included the first parts of the passage because we believe it’s very important to recognize that God has given us *all* and is trustworthy *for* all.

We invite you to spend this day reflecting, repenting, giving thanks and asking God to show you where He can grow your generosity in all ways and to consider the ease and joy with which you can give of your money along with time and attention.

See next page for prayer prompt

Prayer Prompt:

Reflect

Dear God, open my eyes to see that I am yours and I can completely trust in you for everything. You direct my paths and you hear me in my longings and desires. Will you show me, oh Lord, where I have plenty in my “barns”?

Repent

Lord, I am sorry I have forgotten to ask for your wisdom and have chosen to make my own decisions or choices apart from you, your word and your counsel. I place these burdens at the foot of your cross and ask that you forgive me for these and wash me clean with Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice.

Give thanks

Heavenly Father, wow. You are amazing and loving and completely wonderful. How can we even fathom your goodness and how you could allow me to be your child. Thank you for giving me all that I need, refreshing me to my core and providing me strength to worship you and proclaim your goodness.

DAY 8

Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

John 6:11

“Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” (John 6:7) and “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” (John 6:9). Oh how quickly I tend to diminish God’s economy! I think Philip and Andrew’s statements in verses 7 and 9 may be familiar to all of us. He is the Creator of all things, who “...is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17), the infinite God of the universe. And yet we can so quickly underestimate what he can do.

May the Lord awaken us to that sweet and awesome reality that he “...is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...” (Eph. 3:20). May we cry out for things like revival and spiritual transformation in the lives of people in our city, that people would know and love Jesus deeply! May we call upon the name of the Lord that ministries (children’s and youth, community engagement, missions, etc.) would thrive. May the Lord produce great fruit in this new building space and even through the process of acquiring it, far exceeding our expectations! For he, only he, can do it!

Prayer Prompt:

Lord God Almighty, you are the Creator of everything! Your ways and thoughts are far more than our ways and our thoughts. We praise you for who you are and what you have done. We pray that you would continue the work you have already been doing in Gainesville and through City Church, and may you do a mighty work through the City Roots project that far exceeds our expectations.

DAY 9

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

There are a lot of passages in the Bible about giving and a lot of principles in both the Old Testament and New Testament that are related to this topic. In this part of 2 Corinthians, Paul is encouraging generosity. Giving generously involves a component of cheerfully releasing or more accurately re-gifting resources to the Lord. Kingdom generosity looks different and it is something that Christians can and should find joy in! It's one of the many ways we can live differently from the world. In a culture where people are so quick to hold tightly to their possessions, this verse encourages giving cheerfully, not forcefully, apathetically, or indifferent, but cheerfully.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you and confess that there have been times we have given reluctantly or under compulsion rather than cheerfully. We acknowledge that your word says God loves a cheerful giver, not meaning that you do not love us when we don't do so but knowing that it is honoring to you and something you delight in when we give cheerfully.

Lord, we ask that your Spirit lead and guide us in our giving. Help us to honor you with what you have given us and give us wisdom in our giving. We ask that you help us to hold tightly to you and loosely to the things of this world that you have allowed us to have access to. Be working in our hearts, oh Lord! As David prayed in the Psalms, "create in me a pure heart, oh Lord and renew a steadfast spirit in me." May our hearts be led by you and may our actions be that of cheerful obedience and generosity! Amen.

DAY 10

*“The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

Numbers 6:24-26

From the beginning of creation, God’s desire was to bless His creation and His people. He created everything and called it good. He made mankind in His image and called us very good. He filled the earth with life, beauty, and every provision necessary for our flourishing. But, most of all, he gave us Himself; the Author and Creator of life was near to and cared for His creation (Psalm 8).

But mankind turned away. We turned away from God’s commands and sought fulfillment through idolatry. We turned away from our responsibility to steward the earth as God’s representatives. We turned away from loving and caring for one another as proper image bearers. And, most of all, we turned away from God himself – being driven by our guilt and shame away from God’s presence.

Yet, despite all that, God gave us grace. He gave grace to clothe our nakedness and remove our shame. He gave grace to adopt a people as his own by faith. He gave grace to reveal his ways and teach us to walk in them. He gave grace to forgive us of our sins when we failed. He gave grace by dwelling with us and dying for us.

In all of this, the heart of God was revealed time and again: to make His face shine upon us who had turned away from him and to give us peace.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, thank you that you are so gracious to us. Please make your face to shine upon us this day, that we may behold you, enjoy you, and reflect you to the world. Amen.

DAY 11

Our Mission

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:18 - 20

The definition of reconcile is "to restore to friendship or harmony". I think we can all agree that the world needs reconciliation! City Church has an awesome opportunity to help bring reconciliation to our small corner of this world and we want to be faithful to the call to share the Gospel with our city. Expanding our physical space is one way to help accomplish the mission with which we have been entrusted: to be and make disciples of Christ. As we talk about money and construction and paint colors, we want to remember the ultimate goal of reaching lost people for Jesus.

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."
Colossians 1:19 and 20 ESV

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Jesus, please help us to desire and work for the ministry of reconciliation.

DAY 12

“Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord”

Leviticus 27:30

How often do we fall into calculation or speculation when giving resources? It can be easy to overlook the power of God to make use of whatever we may give, regardless of whether we can be certain of all the details. As God says in this passage, every tithe given to the ministry of his people belongs to him. Therefore, he ultimately guides how much of a difference our giving will make.

May any kind of giving we engage in continue to be a reminder that everything we have belongs to God to begin with. May this practice serve this purpose as it did for the Israelites. Any amount of prosperity, in seed or fruit has been given to us so God's glory may be spread through it.

May we remember how the gospel gives us the clearest picture of our standard for tithing. That though Jesus could have chosen to hold back some of himself, he instead gave his whole self on the cross for us. Seeing this will turn our giving posture from a mechanical obligation into a willful expression of joy because of what Jesus has done and a desire for others to experience his love too.

Prayer Prompt:

Father may our prayer be to see more clearly how every seed or fruit, coin or asset we have been given, is for us to steward for your glory; making you and your character known through the way we use it. May the extent of what we know about how our gifts are used not completely dictate the worthiness of our love in providing them. Father turn our eyes to Jesus, the only one who ever truly lived a life holy to you, fully trusting in you as the maker and owner of everything. May the sight of him giving himself for us empower us to trust you more as the true owner and giver of our resources.

DAY 13

Unity

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

May we meditate on and pray over these verses. You might read over this passage a few times and consider John 17 as well.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace. We have no chance without you, but by the power of your Holy Spirit, we too can be peacemakers. May we be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Protect us from division and root out any division that comes about. May you bond this body of believers together so strongly. Draw us near to you and near to each other, that we would love you and love each other so deeply.

DAY 14

“²¹ And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.”

Exodus 35:21

Full text to read: Exodus 35:4-35 and 36:1-7

The Israelite people had been delivered from the bondage of slavery, but not in any ordinary way, but rather a supernatural, extraordinary way in which only God could do it. These people had seen with their own eyes all the wonders that God had done for them. He parted the Red Sea! They also, like us, were forgetful people for after having just been set free from the hand of the Egyptians, they then made an idol of a golden calf in chapter 32. Yet once again, they witnessed the mercy of God as he relented from his wrath and showed them mercy.

With whatever God has given us, whether material wealth or talents, may we give these things to God in response to his goodness! In response to the wonders of the cross and resurrection, and what he has done in our lives.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, give each of us a willing spirit to freely give the things you have called us to give, whatever that may be. Please help us not to forget all that you've done in our lives. Help us to remember over and over and over again. And may we respond to your goodness out of the overflow of our hearts.

DAY 15

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

John 4:34-38

It’s amazing to think how, roughly 10 years ago, people were praying for a small church plant in downtown Gainesville. Now here we are, and we see how God has established City Church’s presence in the downtown community. May the Lord allow City Church to grow even deeper roots, that new relationships with people downtown would be built and current ones would flourish—that people would be led to Jesus—and that the children in our church would know Jesus and grow close to him, growing up to be great witnesses for him.

Lord willing, I’m hopeful that this church can look back and see the seeds sown now be plentifully reaped, similar to how we get to experience the Lord’s fruitful harvest of the works he did through faithful people years ago.

Prayer Prompt:

O Lord, please bring a plentiful harvest. May you use City Church to bring revival to downtown Gainesville. Help us be faithful laborers, whether sowing seeds or reaping the harvest. May you use this building space to do great works, that many people would come to know you, far exceeding our expectations. Give us diligent hearts like Jesus.

DAY 16

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Ephesians 4:11-13

In the NIV translation v. 11 translates “And he” as “So Christ himself” gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” This verse, along with the surrounding verses is a great reminder of how we, the body of Christ, are equipped through the gifts of fellow believers to build up the body of Christ. And these gifts are accessible through Christ in us.

Later in chapter 4, Paul speaks of maturity and no longer being tossed back and forth by the waves. Just as the Ephesians were influenced by their culture, we are influenced by ours. The body of Christ is crucial in countering the way we could be blown in every direction. Whether you exhibit giftings as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, or teacher – the Lord can use you to equip the saints.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we praise you and thank you that Christ himself gave each of these giftings to equip the saints. Thank you that being mature believers is not passive, but an active way for us to build up the body of Christ. We ask that you continue to equip our church family so that we can equip the saints for the work of the ministry today and for generations to come. We thank you that by your Spirit we are empowered to be a saint in this church, in Gainesville, Florida, and in the world today! Amen.

DAY 17

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempt to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10

Beginning this second missionary journey, Paul traveled through the northern Macedonian regions, taking with him Silas, Timothy, and presumably Luke. In this account of their journey, Luke records three specific ways they were guided by Spirit in the way they should go. The Spirit kept them from going to both Asia minor and Bithynia, and then ultimately gave Paul a dream of a Macedonian man pleading for help. After this, they changed their plans and traveled to Macedonia, where they preached the gospel and established churches in cities like Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. Later letters from Paul to some of these churches comprise the inspired Scripture which we study today.

There is no better place to be found than squarely following the Spirit of God, wherever he leads. Let us pray for our pastors to listen to and follow God's Spirit through every season.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, please clearly and mightily guide our pastors by your Spirit. May they walk in the fullness of the Spirit, and may they hear from you daily and follow wherever you lead. And would you yield fruit through this kingdom work for generations. Amen.

DAY 18

⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:4-8

This section highlights the body of Christ and the different functions believers have within the body. These different functions are gifts of grace given to us. We are called to use the gifts given to us in a way that gives honor and glory to God.

What a beautiful reminder that each of us make up the body of Christ. Although we do not all have the same function, we all are needed to function as a collective body. Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leading, and acts of mercy – these gifts do not restrain us from exercising other gifts, perhaps in different seasons the Lord will reveal how to practice a specific gift.

Prayer Prompt:

Father God, we praise you that by your grace we have been given gifts that we can use to bless the body of believers and honor you. We repent of the times we may have used gifts for selfish gain or have withheld from exercising the gifts you've given us. May we be faithful with the ways you've already equipped us to be your hands and feet and would you continue to bless us and urge us by your Spirit to faithfully live out the gifts you've given us. And Lord, we pray that as the body of Christ at City Church we would be faithful with what you've given us right where you have us. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 19

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:9-13

In the ESV translation the heading over these verses is “Marks of the True Christian” and in the NIV translation the heading is “Love in Action” – both pointing out that this passage provides attributes and attitudes that our lives should display. Seeing all these commands could be overwhelming, but we have Christ’s life to look to as an example and we are not called to do this in our own strength.

As a believer there have been times I’ve thought, “Well if only there were some sort of ‘How to’ guide, then I would know if I’m living according to God’s plan and purposes.” We do have that – Scripture does just that and these verses provide tangible “how-to’s” for us to follow. Although we won’t be perfect at it, this could be a good place to start for us to do a quick pressure test of if we are living out the marks of a true Christian. I encourage you to read the full passage of Romans 12:9-21.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Heavenly Father – Thank you for passages like this one in Romans that lists out ways for us to live out our lives as Christians. Lord, as we continue into the journey ahead with purchasing our building, would your Spirit be moving in and through us so that we would live the lives you call us to live as believers and share that with those around us – our church family, our neighbors downtown, and those we have yet to meet. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

DAY 20

[14] Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah...neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. [15] The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people...But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. [16] I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. [17] Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

Nehemiah 5:14-17

In Nehemiah chapter 5 we find Nehemiah himself countering oppression with personal generosity. Surely this generosity was motivated by Nehemiah's understanding of God's lavish generosity, including God's generosity in bringing an Israelite remnant out of exile in Babylon and back to Jerusalem. But Nehemiah's generosity of time (see v. 16 – his work on the wall) and money (see v. 17 – hosting huge dinner gatherings at his expense) was also motivated by “the fear of God” (v. 15). Nehemiah was in such reverent AWE of God (clearly connected to God's generosity to undeserving people) that he couldn't help himself! He joyfully put everything on the table in service of God's mission and plan, sparing no expense. The secret to generous living involves beholding God's generosity and then walking in the fear of the Lord.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord we praise you for your generosity to us, seen clearly in your generosity to the Israelites in the days of Nehemiah, and seen more recently in your generosity to all of us by giving us your only Son. Help us rightly behold your generosity and walk in reverent fear of you that we might be generous ourselves.

DAY 21

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

From time to time, we may wonder what we should do. Either that day or that weekend or during that season of life, the question may linger in our minds, “What does God want me to do?”

Here at the end of Matthew’s gospel, we get the clearest answer possible to this important life question. After his resurrection, Jesus gave his closest followers a specific commission: “go and make disciples.” The most important thing we can spend our time doing – in fact, the very thing our Lord has told us to do – is to spend our lives making disciples. That includes leading others to saving faith in Christ, incorporating them into the church through a public profession in baptism, instructing them in how to live as a follower of Jesus, and doing all of this in the name, grace, and power of our Savior.

Whatever the circumstances are, may this commission from the Lord be the lens through which we view everything in life.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, please grant us a kingdom vision for all of life. Grant our church a zeal and courage for making disciples. Raise up laborers for this work. Equip and empower us to share “all you have commanded” with those around us. May our speech, homes, work, and community be saturated by your grace and goodness, and may many encounter Jesus through that and come to saving faith in him in this year. In the name of Jesus, we ask it. Amen.

DAY 22

For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

“Brothers, pray for us.”

1 Thessalonians 5:25

Pastors and leaders need regular, persistent support through the prayer of their people. When leaders minister out of sincere, gentle, sacrificial, gospel-centered love for the church, it is beautiful and transformative. But there are any number of wrong motivations for ministry. Paul outlines some of those temptations here: people pleasing, recognition, selfishness, greed, influence. Acquiescing to them causes great harm to leader and the church alike.

Let us pray diligently for the protection and perseverance of our pastors and leaders.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, please watch over our pastors and leaders. Fill them with your Spirit and produce tremendous spiritual fruit in their lives. Grant them wisdom to shepherd well. And guard them from the temptations of the flesh and world. All for your glory. Amen.

DAY 23

“¹¹Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ¹⁶who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. ¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

All that we have is God’s. When viewed through that lens, our role as stewards comes to the forefront. Let us be humble, thankful, and joyful as we steward whatever resources he has provided for us.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Lord, thank you so much for the work you have done in my life and the work you are doing in my life. Thank you for the resources that you have given me to steward. I pray for wisdom and guidance for how best to use them, as I know that you know what is best for me right down to the smallest details of my life. I trust your plan and I surrender my own plans to follow yours.

DAY 24

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

1 Corinthians 3:11-13

If our ministry is like construction, it is vitally important that we get two things right: what we build *on* and what we build *with*.

We must build *on* a good foundation. If the foundation is off, everything else that follows is not only wasteful but dangerous. In his parable of the two builders, Jesus compared those who build their lives on a strong foundation with those who build on a weak one. When the storms of life come, the seemingly solid building on a weak foundation will be undermined and will crash, but the building on the strong foundation will endure. Paul makes the same point here: the only secure foundation for a life and ministry is Jesus and his gospel. Building on anything else is perilous.

Second, we must build *with* quality materials. Using cheap substitutes, building hastily, or doing shoddy work will produce something that is subpar and that ultimately doesn't pass inspection. But building well with good materials and skilled labor will produce something that is beautiful, useful, and enduring. What are we to build with? The Spirit of God, the word of God, and tools compatible with the gospel (2 Tim 1:6-7, 2:14-17). These convert souls, transform lives, and build up the body for worship and service.

Prayer Prompt:

God, may everything we do be built on the foundation of the gospel and with the power of God's word and Spirit. And may we faithfully steward every resource you give to build up the body.

DAY 25

“³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.”

Exodus 40:34-38

A church building is just a building without the presence of God. May we call upon God’s Spirit to be present in City Church, to fill up the space! How desperately we need his presence. We need his powerful conviction and tender comfort. We need his wisdom and insight. Where the Spirit of God is there is liberty! (2 Cor. 3:17)

So may God’s Spirit be ever present in our church and in downtown Gainesville.

Prayer Prompt:

Dear Lord, we ask for you to fill us up with your Spirit and go before us in everything we think and say and do. May you be present at City Church and may all of downtown Gainesville see your glory and goodness emanating from this place.

DAY 26

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

Here we have perhaps the most famous passage in the Bible about the heart of Jesus. Rather than being bothered or frustrated by the approaches of his children, Jesus effectively pleads with us to come to him that we might find REST. Certainly, Jesus can (and does) give us physical and emotional rest, but this passage emphasizes the spiritual rest Jesus gives for our souls. Jesus is an inexhaustible fountain of spiritual refreshment, even when we're in the throes of discouragement, shame, spiritual depression, restlessness, physical ailments, or even relational strife and loneliness.

And when we come to Jesus, he will not scold us or say, "I told you so," for he is gentle and lowly in heart. Jesus welcomes us with open arms, genuinely ecstatic that we've arrived. Then as we take his yoke upon ourselves and learn from him, he will not leave us as we are! He will change us both individually and corporately. The rest we're experiencing in Jesus will reshape our hearts, which in turn affects the character of our entire church family. Oh, that we might be a people "at rest" who bring his rest to our city and our world!

Prayer Prompt:

Lord convince us that you are the giver of ultimate rest and convince us that you WANT us to come to you for that rest. Give us rest even now for our anxious, restless, souls that we might truly enjoy you and enjoy our miraculous status as your beloved children. Amen.

DAY 27

²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

2 Corinthians 8:2-5

What an unlikely equation Paul outlines in these verses. In sharing about the grace God has given to the church in Macedonia he mentions that “for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity”. Let’s take a look at it as if it were a “math” equation:

*Severe **Affliction** + Abundant **Joy** + Extreme **Poverty** = Overflowing **Generosity***

Paul doesn’t stop there. He goes on saying that they gave according to their means, and even beyond their means. Besides the generosity shown here, verse 5 really highlights a true heart posture that far exceeds earthly giving – “they gave themselves first to the Lord,” that’s the true mark of a believer – who are we giving ourselves to?

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, we desire to be a generous people as we serve a generous God. We acknowledge that there have been times where we don’t first give ourselves to you and instead give ourselves to other things – people, work, money, recreation, leisure, things that aren’t inherently bad, but not deserving of being first in our lives. By your grace and power, would you be at work in our lives to help us put you first and as a result contribute to the kingdom of God through overflowing generosity? Amen.

DAY 28

“...but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.”

Deuteronomy 29:15

In the context of this verse, changes abound: Moses is coming to the end of his life. He will soon hand off the mantle of leadership to Joshua. The generation who survived the 40-year journey through the wilderness will soon see God’s promise fulfilled as they enter the Promised Land.

In times of great change, it is often helpful to remember and renew our commitment. Moses rehearses God’s power, provision, and protection in the wilderness, and reminds them God’s promise was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and affirmed through generations of captivity in Egypt. God was faithful in the past and the present, and He would continue to be faithful in the future to “whoever is not here with us today.” This call to remembrance and renewed faithfulness is just as relevant for us today as we walk with God in our city to cultivate Gospel presence for generations.

Prayer Prompt:

Father, we are humbled that you have chosen to include us in your redemptive plan. It is a plan that transcends time and place, ages and civilizations, cultures and languages. May we grow in our ability to grasp the immense scope of your promises. Help us to maintain a sense of perspective as we seek to be faithful to the mission to which you have called us. May we celebrate and build upon the work of those who have gone before us even as we work to be and make disciples in the present. Give us a passion to see the Gospel take root in the hearts and lives of future generations for your glory. AMEN.

DAY 29

[4] “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. [5] You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [6] And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise...”

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

God makes it clear to the Israelites that forming future generations is far more than a Sunday morning activity. Corporate worship is critically important, but so is ongoing dialogue with “your children” throughout the day in both formal and informal settings. Sometimes we’ll be reading and teaching. Sometimes we’ll be listening patiently to curious questions. Sometimes we’ll be asking questions of our own. And in all of those circumstances we’ll be looking for opportunities to winsomely sow God’s word into the hearts of the children in our church family – keeping in mind that Jesus himself paid special attention to children during his earthly ministry (see for example Matt. 19:13-15).

Don’t have children of your “own”? You still have a part in this! God calls all of us to be spiritual fathers and mothers. God calls all of us to find creative and intentional ways to minister to the children who are part of our spiritual community. And in the Lord our labor will not be in vain.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord give us zeal and wisdom as we seek to form our children spiritually in the rhythms of our everyday lives. And by your power may we form them with both our speech and our actions. Amen.

DAY 30

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”? ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:27-31

The beginning of Isaiah 40 is an inflection point from the woes and burdens the Israelites were facing to the promise and assurance of comfort from God. “¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40:1-2) Let’s praise God that He is our comfort!

You may be familiar with the verses that come later on in Isaiah 40 – “but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” In the NIV translation, verse 31 says “but those who hope in the LORD”, waiting and hoping implies trusting or having an expectation that God will provide – He who never grows tired or weary will renew the strength of His people.

Our pastors, just like anybody, need continual sustenance and renewal. They particularly need to be comforted and have their strength renewed in this season of setting roots in downtown Gainesville. From meeting with general contractors, tenants, business owners, downtown neighbors, and our church body there’s a lot of things on their plate, beyond what we see on a Sunday morning. Let us pray that the Lord will renew their strength and for our pastors to rest in being encouraged daily by the Lord’s faithfulness and His promises.

See next page for prayer prompt

Prayer Prompt:

Father God, we thank you and praise you because you are who you say you are. You are a great comforter, the everlasting God, your mercies are new every day! You know all of our needs, wants, and desires and so to of our pastors! Lord, we lift Chipper, Ryan, and Jay along with the rest of our church leadership up to you – that you would renew them day by day and bless them richly in this endeavor! We pray all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 31

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith – to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Romans 16:25-27

The epistle to the Romans, perhaps Paul's most thorough unpacking of the gospel, concludes with a hearty celebration of the goodness and redemptive work of God. This is both a helpful instruction and beautiful example of the response we should have to the good news of Jesus.

It is only fitting to conclude our 31 days of prayer by praising God. Today, let us praise our wonderful God who...

- ...strengthens and establishes us through the gospel.
- ...reveals himself to us, that we may know him.
- ...is eternally true, right, and good.
- ...eagerly brings about the obedience of faith in us.
- ...is infinitely wise.
- ...offers us redemption through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prayer Prompt:

God, we praise you today! You are our greatest delight and the source of our joy. Thank you for giving us life, forgiveness, mercy, and grace through Jesus. We ask that you open the eyes of our hearts, that we may know, see, and trust you better. And we pray that you would be glorified in our lives and in the lives of generations of Christ-followers at City Church for years to come. Amen!