

# 2023 Devotions

# SACRED SEASON

**JANUARY 1- JANUARY 21, 2023**

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# SACRED SEASON

What are you praying for?

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Testimony

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## About Sacred Season

We look at the beginning of a new year as a time to start over. A time to wipe the slate clean from all our mistakes and do things better this year. We tend to focus mostly on our physical well-being. We try new diets, start exercising, and even try to act better in our everyday lives. The apostle Paul gives us a different perspective in 1 Corinthians Chapter 9. He says, *“So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others, I myself might be disqualified.”* Paul's perspective is that we should train our bodies and keep our flesh under subjection not just for the purpose of physical benefits but mostly for the purpose of the spiritual benefit. When we exert control over our flesh, we allow the Spirit to step in to lead us. All too often we get comfortable following our flesh instead of the Holy Spirit within us. Fasting resets the leadership over our body. It takes the control away from the flesh and puts it firmly in the hands of the spirit. This is where we ought to live at all times, but none of us are perfect. So, we take these times to get back in tune with the will of God for our lives.

When we allow our flesh to control us, it leads us to destructive habits, destroyed relationships and a distance between us and our Father God. In the book of Joel, destruction was sweeping through the community. In Joel 2, God says to call a fast (v.15) and for the entire church (all ages) to come together in this without excuse, and He calls the leadership into a deeper time of prayer (v. 17). In Joel 2:18, it says the Lord was jealous or zealous for His people! Instead of the destruction that was sweeping through the land, God instead sent blessings to “satisfy them fully” (v.19) and to overflow their reserves (v. 24). He said he would repay the year that was stolen from them (V. 25) and they would have plenty (V.26).

This is where we must stand on the promises of God's word and take action to come back into alignment with him. Sacred Season is a time set aside to do just that. I believe God is ready to do amazing things in your lives. I also believe that when we fast and pray that God pours out his blessings on every part of our lives not just so we can have plenty, but so that his name can be lifted high (v. 27).

Lastly, in Joel, the Lord says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (V. 32). I believe as we draw closer to God, people will see a difference in our lives and will desire that same transformation in their lives.

## Jan. 1      **What are we doing?**

*“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”*

*Isaiah 43:19*

It's a new year, a new season of your life, a fresh start for your family. What will you do with it?

As I think through that last comment, I'm challenged to look back over my shoulder into last year. The promises I made that I didn't fulfill, the bills I didn't get paid off, the pounds I didn't lose, the time with my family that I didn't spend, or even the relationship with God that I didn't cultivate like I wanted to.

So often we are looking over our shoulder with such frustration that we miss the opportunity in front of us. There is a new year and a fresh start that is waiting on you to tackle it. It's time to make plans for the path that you will walk this year.

**Will you plan on reading this devotional every day for the next 21 days?**

**Will you plan on serving somewhere in the church for the next 21 days?**

**Will you plan on attending prayer every Monday night for the next 21 days?**

**Will you plan on fasting at least one meal every day for the next 21 days?**

**Will you rearrange your finances in such a way that you're able to give with the expectation of reaping on Sunday, January 22nd?**

These aren't huge requests, in fact to some of you these are rather easy. I know that if you do these 5 things to start your year off, that 2023 will be aligned to launch you into an incredible season.

Benjamin Franklin says, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." Solomon says in Proverbs 21:5 that the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.

Will you make a plan for 2023 that sets you up for success? What will you do with the new opportunities set before you?

\* (Throughout this devotion, I will be using scripture from the Bible as well as excerpts from various books that God has used to touch my heart. I will list them at the end of this booklet.)

**Jan. 2**            **“Everyone wants my mantle, but no one wants my sackcloth and ashes.”**  
                         **-Leonard Ravenhill**

This quote by Leonard Ravenhill was in response to seminary students who wanted to come and have him lay hands on them and pray over them. We all like the easy way out. We want the reward but don't want to put forth the risk required to attain it. As a pastor, I often get frustrated with people who want me to pray for their situations, like my prayer has greater power than theirs. The truth is, some don't want to put forth the effort and others just don't believe that God will hear them. What we must realize is, it takes sacrifice to grow and mature in our walk with Christ and if we are not willing to put forth that effort, we're not going to see the rewards that come from that kind of spiritual maturity.

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.” Matthew 16:24-25*

**Jan. 3**            **“No man is greater than his prayer life. The Pastor who is not praying, is playing; the people who are not praying are straying.” -Why Revival Tarries**

Prayer is the door to knowing the will of God and the power and authority to carry it out. Yet we rarely go to the door, much less open it. We are “too busy”, or we forget. Would that excuse work on your spouse? Would you honestly expect your earthly relationships to flourish without daily communication? God has promised to give us access to himself if we will only seek him. Today, commit to a daily prayer time. You won't regret it!

*“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:12-13*

**Jan. 4**

When is the last time you prayed for our President?  
Go ahead, take a minute. I'll wait.

Now for those of you that didn't get mad and leave, seriously, when is the last time you prayed for him?

I'm ashamed to say that it's been months. But I can probably remember the last time I complained about him or laughed at him.

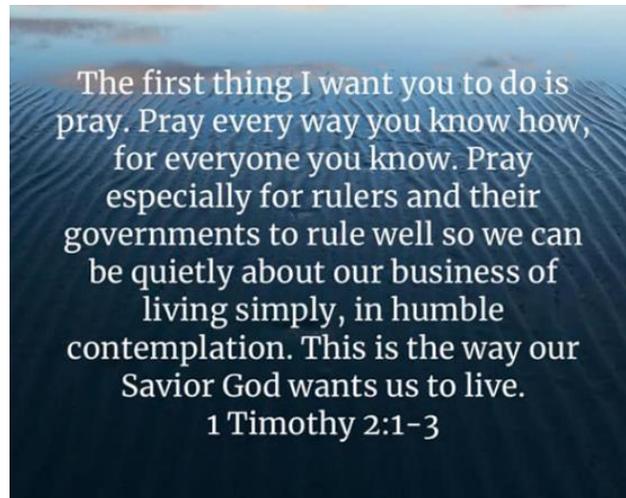
We don't have to agree with his policies, but we should realize that we don't know what kind

of pressure he is under. And, at the end of the day, he is a soul that Jesus came to die for.

Love him or not, God desires us to pray for him. And our prayer shouldn't be that God will make him do the things we want but that God would draw our President close to himself, guide and direct him and give him wisdom.

Are you going to pray for your President today? What about tomorrow?

It's God's way and it should be ours too.



**Jan. 5**



The voice of God never wastes a syllable. Every utterance brings life to the dead. Even a whisper from God creates the unimaginable.

Be still. Can you hear it?

He's speaking your name today.

You might not see it yet but everything in your life is changing as he calls out to you. Turn your ear toward heaven, smile and receive. There is power in His words.

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

**Jan. 6**        **"I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him."**  
**-Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire**

The Bible says that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. In a world where strength is heralded, it's hard to show our weaknesses. But being transparent and humble to others and being honest with ourselves is what causes us to realize that we need the strength that only God can give. Today, be willing to show your weaknesses to those around you so they can see God's strength through you.

*"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."*  
*2 Corinthians 12:9*

**Jan. 7**        **"I despaired at the thought that my life might slip by without seeing God show himself mightily on my behalf." -Jim Cymbala**

Do we see our Christianity as a way out of hell or as merely a ticket into heaven? Or do we see our Christianity as an opportunity for God to gain glory through the way he moves in our lives? God's desire is to pour himself through us into the world around us. But if we don't understand that, then we will never allow him to do that. Tim Tebow said, "You don't exist to just hang out, to just meander through life. You were created for a purpose. God has a mission and a plan for your life." I agree and I don't want to just go through life and barely make it into heaven. I want God to use me to reach the lost and to do his will on this earth. How about you?

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."*  
*John 14:12*

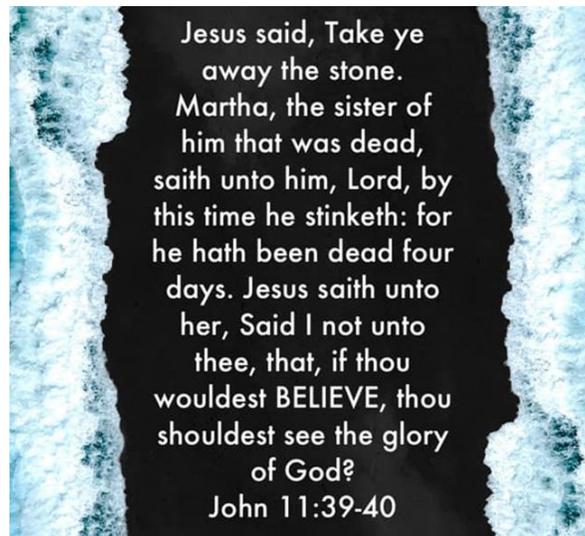
**Jan. 8**        **"If we have the audacity to ask, God has the ability to perform." -Steven Furtick**

Sometimes we have trouble believing God for miracles. It's not that we don't believe he can, it's that we don't believe he will. We see ourselves as so undeserving that we can't imagine

why the God of all creation would do anything for us. But he tells us in his word that we can ask and receive. He also says that all things are possible to those who believe. It comes down to simple faith. If we can get up the guts to ask, we may just find that God was ready to move for us all along. Try out your faith and see what God does.

*“Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Hebrews 11:6*

**Jan. 9**



I sometimes wonder how many times I've missed out on seeing the "Glory of God" because I couldn't believe.

The word *believe* means to have faith that persuades. (Strong's Concordance G4100).

The Bible also says,

*“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto the mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”  
Matthew 17:20*

This tells me that it doesn't take a lot of faith to persuade God to show his glory. I just have to start using it. Lord, increase my faith. 🙏

**Jan. 10      God has a plan**

*“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the*

*things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.””*

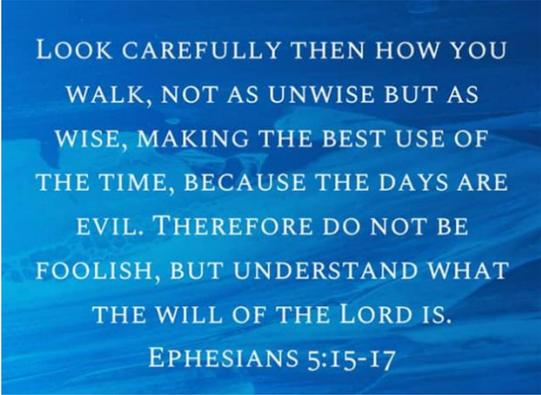
*I Corinthians 1:26-31 NKJV*

I’m so thankful that God chooses to use the plain and mundane. I’m not mighty, wise or loved by the world but I am perfect for His plan.

### **And you are too!**

Here is a word from God, *“Do not overlook those that are plain and mundane. I have a plan for them, and it will put to shame the plans of the high and mighty. Will you follow my lead?”*

### **Jan. 11**



LOOK CAREFULLY THEN HOW YOU  
WALK, NOT AS UNWISE BUT AS  
WISE, MAKING THE BEST USE OF  
THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE  
EVIL. THEREFORE DO NOT BE  
FOOLISH, BUT UNDERSTAND WHAT  
THE WILL OF THE LORD IS.  
EPHESIANS 5:15-17

There has never been a time where it is more important to walk in God’s will than these days we live in.

The days are evil. And to accomplish our commission to “Go Ye”, we must make sure we are not being led astray.

Be wise, listen to God. He desires to lead you today.

### **Jan. 12                    Walk in God’s favor**

A promise from God for you today.

*“They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a*

*tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear."*  
*Isaiah 65:21-24 NKJV*

As God's children we will sometimes face hardships, but we will ALWAYS walk in His favor.

**Jan. 13      GO TO SLEEP!!**

If the devil can't take you out, he will try to wear you out. Stop obsessing. Stop ruminating. Stop scheming. Stop rehashing. Stop analyzing. Stop worrying. Give it to God and go to sleep. Since God never slumbers nor sleeps, there's no use both of you staying awake.

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. Psalm 4:8*

**Jan. 14      Are you pursuing peace and holiness today?**

It's the only way to see God.

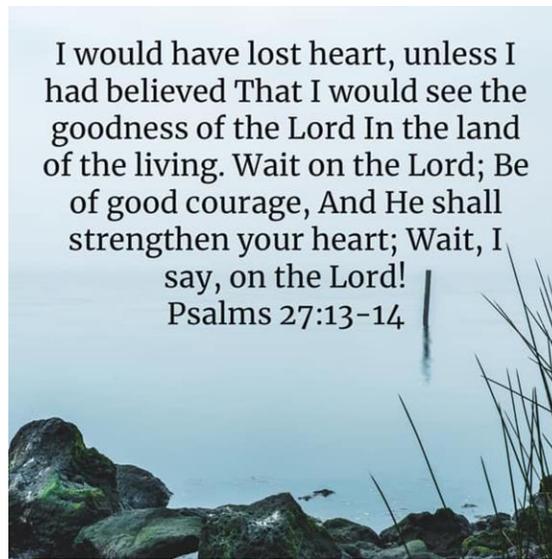
*"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:11-14*

**Jan. 15      Keep your chin up!**

It's easy to get discouraged in the world we live in. But it's in those times that we must remember who God is and what his promises are.

He's never let you down and he WON'T START NOW!!

Wait on him, the goodness of the Lord is running after you!!



## Jan. 16                      Heavenly Places

When I was younger, we used to sing a song in church that went something like this... "And we're made to sit in heavenly places. When the power of God begins to fall..."

I remember experiencing some of those heavenly times as a kid but as I'm older now I realize that God didn't intend for us to experience heavenly places on occasion.

*Ephesians 2:4-6*

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"*

The work that Jesus did wasn't so we could "visit" him every now and then. It was so we could pull up a permanent seat with him in those heavenly places.

Today, pull your chair up beside him, kick back and get comfortable.

He wants you to stay awhile.



Jan. 17

## Nothing compares....

*“This is why it is so crucial that we be all the more engaged and attentive to the truths that we have heard so that we do not drift off course. For if the message of the law spoken and confirmed by angels brought a just penalty to every disobedient violation; then how would we expect to escape punishment if we despise the very truths that give us life? The Lord himself was the first to announce these things, and those who heard him firsthand confirmed their accuracy. Then God added his witness to theirs. He validated their ministry with signs, astonishing wonders, all kinds of powerful miracles, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he distributed as he desired.” Hebrews 2:1-4*

It's easy in the world we live in to get slack in our Christian walk. Over time we lose the fervor we had when we first believed. But even though we lose our excitement and passion it doesn't lessen the greatness of what God has done for us.

Early on in our walk we were excited about living right, we were conscious of being holy and not wanting to do anything that might separate us from the newfound joy, love and peace we were experiencing.

As the new wore off we struggled to “feel” anymore. Our feelings might have changed but what God did for us didn't. It is still an amazing grace that we didn't deserve, and we must consciously put in the effort to remain close to him.

The scriptures above say, if there was discipline and punishment for not following the old covenant, how much more for not following the new covenant.

He's not a mean God waiting to punish us no more than most normal parents are. But he will discipline us out of his immense love so that we can continue to have an intimate relationship with him.

How do we stay in intimacy with him?

*“As you yield freely and fully to the dynamic life and power of the Holy Spirit, you will abandon the cravings of your self-life.” Galatians 5:16*

In other words, walk in the Spirit. Stay in tune with God by allowing Holy Spirit to guide you, and not your own desires.

Yes, it takes some work on our part to train ourselves to listen to him. But the end result is being able to hear as he whispers sweet intimate words into our ears.

And there is NOTHING that compares to that.

Jan. 18



This should also apply to others we have relationships with, whether children, siblings, parents or even close friends.

Praying for our loved ones keeps our attitudes right toward them. So, praying for others is as good for them as it is for us.

Here are some scriptures to help guide our prayers:

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:31-32*

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

*“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12*

*“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5*

*“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” Says the LORD.” Isaiah 54:17*

If you’ve struggled to consistently pray for the ones you love, start today, and follow these 3 easy steps.

1. Keep it short
2. Keep it consistent
3. If you miss a day, don’t miss two.

**Jan. 19**

**He's praying for you**

I don't like to walk in the woods, by myself, in the dark. I'm not afraid of ghosts or some machete wielding maniac but the idea of running up on a wild animal scares me. I know it's an irrational fear and that I'm bigger than they are, and they will probably run from me. I also, NEVER go in the woods without firepower but that fear is still there.

So many times, we allow fear to dictate how we live our lives. There are things we don't do or won't try because of fear. There are relationships we don't have because of fear. There are things of God that we don't step into because we're afraid. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, yet we allow it to run/ruin our lives.

*"While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost..."*

*John 17:12 ESV*

Great News!! We don't have to live in fear! Jesus is protecting us. He's not surprised by what happens in our lives.

*"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died..."*

*...more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."*

*Romans 8:34 ESV*

It's because he is EVER interceding that we can let go of our worries and fears and live the abundant life he promised.

Today, pray and ask God what you need to stop fearing. Then let it go and rest, knowing that Jesus is praying for YOU!

**Jan. 20**

**Where's your passion?**

Charlie Peace was a criminal. Laws of God or man curbed him not. Finally, the law caught up with him and he was condemned to death. On the fatal morning in Armley jail, Leeds, England, he was taken on the death walk. Before him went the prison chaplain, routinely and sleepily reading some Bible verses. The criminal touched the preacher and asked what he was reading. "The Consolations of Religion," was the reply. Charlie Peace was shocked at the way he professionally read about hell. Could a man be so unmoved under the very shadow of the scaffold as to lead a fellow human there and yet dry-eyed read of a pit that has no bottom into which this fellow must fall? Could this preacher believe the words that there is an eternal fire

that never consumes its victims, and yet slide over the phrase without a tremor? Is a man human at all who can say with no tears, “You will be eternally dying and yet never know the relief that death brings”? All this was too much for Charlie Peace. “Sir,” addressing the preacher, “if I believed what you and the church **say** that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees and think it worthwhile living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!”  
(from *Why Revival Tarries*)

How much are we like this chaplain that we have no passion for the gospel? That we have no compassion for the lost? Have we forgotten what awaits those that don't know Jesus as their Savior? God help us to have a renewed fervor for the lost and an appreciation for the sacrifice that was made to save us from an eternal Hell.

## Jan. 21                      Love One Another

Most days I look at my wife like this.



But there are times when I look at her like this.



Hey, it happens. LOL

It's in these times that I must remember that God has every right to look at me like this



BUT, his love is so big that he always sees me like this



*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” John 13:34*

No one will always please us or make us happy but that should never change our love for them.

If God’s love for us was dependent on our actions, we would never have it. But praise God! He loved us no matter what and if we love Him, we MUST love one another!

On this last day of Sacred Season, commit to loving people the way God loves you. You’ll be amazed at the difference it makes in your life and relationships and it will allow others to see Jesus in you.

**\* Book List**

*The Bible*

*Why Revival Tarries*      -Leonard Ravenhill

*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*      -Jim Cymbala

*Sun Stand Still*      -Steven Furtick