

feeding your hunger

PERSONAL NOURISHMENT FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



INWORD



feeding your hunger

PERSONAL NOURISHMENT FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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feeding your hunger

PERSONAL NOURISHMENT FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

YOUR JOURNEY

The simple act of you looking at the words on this page (or screen) is a Divine culmination. Something has recently stirred within you that has created a hunger for more God. Our prayer is that this booklet can be a tool to lead you to the “pure spiritual milk” that 1 Peter 2:2 tells us will provide the nourishment we need.

THIS BOOK

Seven days. That timeframe might ring a bell. In God’s world a lot can happen in seven days. More specifically, a lot can be created in seven days. And that even includes a day of rest. This book, by design, is seven days. It’s a tool dedicated for God to use to unleash His creative force in your heart and mind, to help personal, spiritual awakenings season into a life of intimacy with God and a journey of experiencing His call on your life. Let each day of this devotional be a day that God creates something new in you.

Before you dive in, take a moment to understand the cues used in this book. Noted below, these cues will help you maximize these next seven days.



DIGGING IN/DIGGING DEEPER

God has a purpose behind every verse of the Bible. You don’t want to miss a word. Each “Digging” exercise will prompt you with things to look for when exploring a passage, asking you to interact with the message of God’s Word in various ways. This step will help you see what God wants to show you in His Word.



TAKING IT INWARD

God has meaning in every verse of the Bible. By pausing and thinking about what we “dig up” from Scripture, we give God opportunity to impress His Word on our hearts and minds. This step will help you listen to what God wants to teach you.



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Once we’ve dug into a passage and let it seep into our hearts and minds, we need to ask ourselves one simple question: “What do I need to do now?” The answer should be clear. Each day’s “Putting Into Practice” is a chance for you to make the change God is looking for in your life.

WHAT’S NEXT?

This book has been consecrated to be used as a tool for stepping into a deep, abiding walk with Jesus. Think of each “day” as a portal into the subject of that day. Other tools and resources are available to help you continue feeding the hunger that God is creating in your heart. We invite you to explore each day’s subject in a deeper way at www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger. You’ll also see this link and the prompt “Digging Even Deeper” at the close of each day.



DAY 1: FEEDING YOUR

hunger

QUICK BACKGROUND

Something has brought you to this book. Maybe a movement of God in your life that has created a craving for depth or intimacy. Or maybe an internal realization of a gap between where you are in your faith journey and where you would like to be. Take a moment to prayerfully reflect on your path to reading these words. Was it an experience or event? A person (friend/family/pastor)? An internal conviction? Something else?

Describe what you've been experiencing that has created a desire for more God in your life?



DIGGING IN

Much of the New Testament was written to believers to encourage them in living out their new faith in Christ, a situation that may resonate with you as you seek to satisfy a spiritual hunger. The New Testament book of Colossians contains a small chunk of Scripture custom-made for this moment, Colossians 1:3-6, a passage that defines the essence of deepening new or refreshed faith. As you read the passage below, circle or highlight the word "you" whenever you see it. This will help you notice some key detail about the people the book of Colossians was originally written to.

Colossians 1:3-6

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

Now do this: Look at the "yous" you circled and in the space below jot down every detail you can find about the first readers of Colossians.

First Readers of Colossians:

hunger



TAKING IT INWARD

The Colossian believers obviously had a lifechanging experience with the gospel. What words or phrases describe what happened to them as a result of this experience?

This experience of the Colossians led them to a deeper understanding of God's relationship with them. In this instance, it was an understanding of God's grace. Journal a few thoughts on how your recent experiences have led to an understanding of one of God's great attributes such as grace, or mercy, or love (or any other).



DIGGING DEEPER

The apostle Peter wrote his first letter to Christian believers scattered across a large region, believers who were recently changed by the message of the gospel. One of the most famous lines from Peter's first letter is noted below. Underline any instructions you see and circle anything that might describe your recent experiences.

1 Peter 2:2-3

² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

While the next set of questions may seem obvious, the act of processing them will help you linger over these two verses and give God more opportunity to speak to you on this passage.

What's the instruction that you see?

In what manner is this instruction to be carried out? What's the analogy used?

What is the reward for following this instruction?

What apparently had occurred in the lives of these first readers that got all of this started?



TAKING IT INWARD

Take a moment to personally ingest (to keep Peter's food analogy going) this passage. But let's work our way back from the end of the verse.

...now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

What experiences have you had recently that you could describe as having tasted "that the Lord is good"? Why is Peter's phrasing a good way to describe these types of experiences?

Hunger

...grow up in your salvation...

It's obvious that we are not to stay in a state of tasting, but we are to "grow up" in our salvation. What does this look like to you? And you may want to check out a few other verses for a frame of reference: Colossians 4:12, Ephesians 4:13-16, Hebrews 5:14, James 1:4.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk...

Think for a minute about the *purest* forms of spiritual nutrition. What comes to your mind? There are a couple of correct answers...but keep thinking on it...before we share...just a bit more time...okay...here we go. The purest forms of spiritual nutrition: God's Word and God's Spirit (which is most experienced through prayer). Peter gives us a vibrant visual image of how we are to desire this spiritual nutrition—it's easy to picture a hungry baby. How does this instruction and imagery speak to you? Is it convicting? Inspiring? Challenging?

INSIGHT

The Greek word (*epipotheō*) that is translated "crave" gives us some good insight into the intensity of this word. It means "to arduously or earnestly desire" and "to long for." It's the same Greek word used in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) for those famous words of Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants (*epipotheō*) for streams of water." (NIV) One other thing: When the first readers of Peter's letter heard this word read in the context of this letter, they would have received it with a sense of excitement.



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

What words would you use to describe your desire for spiritual nutrition? Would it be words like *crave*, *enthusiastic*, *robust*? Or, being completely candid, would it be words like *casual*, *passing*, *haphazard*? When we experience the presence of God's Spirit, whether during a spontaneous outpouring or a planned worship experience like a concert or a convention, we usually emerge with a desire for spiritual nutrition that can be at an all-time high. Life distractions may tend to tamp down that high, not to mention the Enemy who is on a constant mission to keep us tamped down. It's okay that enthusiasm may ebb and flow, but one thing is certain: We "grow up" in our salvation through spiritual nutrition.

Below you'll see 4 prompts derived from the passages of Colossians and 1 Peter that you just explored. Beneath each prompt, write out a practical step you can do to begin metabolizing your personal spiritual nutrition.

1. The believers in Colosse were prayed for. Make a list of people who can be your personal prayer team. Create a group on your favorite chat platform to share prayer needs and encouragement with each other.
2. The faith of the believers in Colosse sprang from the hope stored up for them in heaven. Take

hunger

some time to reflect on your hope stored up in heaven. Journal a few thoughts on how that hope impacts your faith walk.

3. The believers in Colosse had a renewed understanding of one of God's great attributes: grace. The first readers of 1 Peter had recently "tasted" God's goodness. What great attribute of God have you recently encountered? What can you do to explore and more deeply experience this attribute?

Some idea-starters:

- Use a study Bible like the *Thompson Chain-Reference Bible* to follow this attribute through Scripture.
- Read the writings of a trusted author, pastor, scholar on this attribute.
- Create a study group to explore this attribute in community.

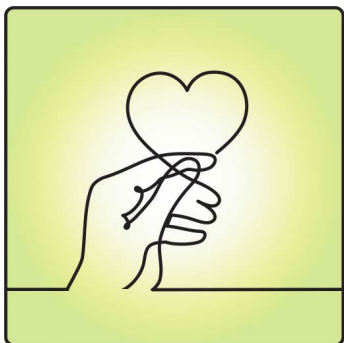
4. The first readers of 1 Peter were exhorted to long for spiritual nutrition. What can you do to tweak your craving for God's Word and God's Spirit? While Day 3 and Day 4 of this booklet dive deeper into these areas of spiritual nourishment, what can you change to create space in your life for engaging Bible time and thoughtful prayer time?



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

hunger



DAY2: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

Love

QUICK BACKGROUND

When we experience a renewed closeness to God it's often because we have encountered a trait of God like mercy or grace that touches something deep inside of us—a longing, a hurt, a regret. In Day 1 we saw that the Colossians had encountered God's great attribute of grace (Colossians 1:6) and the readers of 1 Peter had encountered firsthand God's goodness (1 Peter 2:3). It's likely you have experienced a trait of God that has led you on a quest for more of God in your life.

But before we go any further in exploring a deeper walk with God, there is one trait of God that must be encountered firsthand. It's the trait that defines God, in fact, it's more than a trait, it is God's very essence. It is, very simply, love.



DIGGING IN

In 1 John 4:8 we are told that God is love. Think about that. The very substance of God is love. If God were to bleed, He would bleed love. In fact, that's what Jesus did. The passages below trace God's love for His creation through Scripture. The list culminates with verses from John's letters (John accounts for 30 percent of the New Testament's use of the word "love"). As you read these passages, journal your thoughts on these questions:

How is God's love described?

How did God show His love?

Exodus 15:13

In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 3:16

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 4:9

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

1 John 4:10

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Love

Revelation 1:4-6

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.



TAKING IT INWARD

After reading these verses, take a moment to reflect on God's love with these questions:

What is your heart feeling about God's love?

If you were to use these verses to describe God's love from scratch, how would you describe it?

The subject of God's love is big. It's not only the key driver behind God's revelation to humankind, it's the key driver to the existence of creation itself. The vastness of God's love, however, can make it difficult to comprehend. In fact, one of the most famous prayers in Scripture is simply a prayer that God's people would have power to grasp the expansiveness of this love (Ephesians 3:16-19). This shows not only how big God's love is for us, but how important it is to try to comprehend this love.

So, before we go any further, take some time to personally breathe this prayer in Ephesians 3:16-19. Meditate and reflect on this passage with a focus on experiencing that power. Sit in silence with this passage until your heart is warmed by God's love. Consider messaging a friend right now to ask them to pray this prayer on your behalf...and, in turn, offer to pray this prayer on behalf of your friend.

Ephesians 3:16-19

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



DIGGING DEEPER

Now that your heart might be more empowered to grasp the expanse of God's love, let's dive a little deeper. The verses below provide great detail on how much God loves you. Read these verses with a soft heart and journal anything that comes to your mind about God's love. After reading the passages, use the questions below simply as prompts if needed.

What special nugget of truth seems personally and intentionally meant for you at this very moment in your life?

What brings comfort?

What brings conviction?

Love

What brings a feeling of relief?

What brings a sense of assurance?

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 4:7-12

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.



TAKING IT INWARD

If we're all honest, there are probably times when we don't feel loved by God—times of loss, or heartache, or disappointment. Sometimes it can feel like it's a game of “He loves me, He loves me not.” But try this little thought exercise: picture yourself playing that game. Except don't picture the game using a daisy (the traditional “loves me, loves me not” flower), picture playing that game with the plant that was part of the crucifixion, a crown of thorns. It's really hard to pluck off a thorn and say, “He loves me not.” Jesus settled His love for us on the cross. In fact, it's during our loss and heartache that Jesus cuddles us just a bit more (see John 11), like a parent with a sick child.

Take some time to reflect on Jesus' act of love on the cross. First, use your imagination to take that act as personally as possible.

- Imagine Jesus' eyes.
- Imagine your name rolling across His mind.
- Imagine His sacred blood pooling at the foot of the cross, creating puddles in the footprints from the soldiers.

Now, ask God this question and linger until something is impressed on your heart or mind. Write what comes to mind.

God, how much do you love me?





PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

The application of today's devotional isn't so much something to do, but something to be, or perhaps more accurately, something to embrace. How does the knowledge of God's immense and lavish love for you impact your outlook on life? Take a moment to think about God's relentless love for you in light of things in life that try to separate us from God's love.

Your regrets?

Your fears?

Your hurts?

Your future?

Your mistakes?

Now express what was impressed on your heart or mind as you asked God how much He loves you, or as you moved through the exercises of today's devotional. Journal your thoughts. Paint a picture of what's in your mind. Create a dance. Compose a song. Write a poem. Draw a picture. Take a picture. The possibilities of expression are almost as endless as God's love. So, express away. Then, share your creation. To help you get started, we've included a quote from the late Brennan Manning, beloved author and former Franciscan priest.

"The God I've come to know by sheer grace, the Jesus I met in the grounds of my own self, has furiously loved me regardless of my state – grace or disgrace. And why? For His love is never, never, never based on performance, never conditioned by our moods – of elation or depression. The furious love of God knows no shadow of alteration or change. It is reliable. Always tender."

– Brennan Manning, "The Furious Longing of God"



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through love, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

Love



DAY3: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

the word

QUICK BACKGROUND

Maybe you know the story: God chooses nation. Nation chooses God. God gives land to nation. Nation disobeys God. Nation removed from its land. Nation returns to its land. Nation waits for Messiah. It's the story of most of the Old Testament—the relationship between a nation (Israel) and God. The book of Nehemiah takes place during the “Nation returns to its land” segment—a segment that comes off the heels of the calamitous “removed from its land” segment. Ezra, a priest, led a group of returnees (as recorded in the book of Ezra) to restore the temple. Nehemiah led a group of returnees to restore the city's walls. In Nehemiah 7 the walls are finished and the people, after decades of exile, are restored to their land. After this epic chain of events, Nehemiah 8 records the first official act after the walls are finished.



DIGGING IN

Get to Nehemiah 8 (either in your Bible or with a Bible app). Read the chapter (it's an easy read) and use the prompts below to notice a few things about this scene:

1. **As the chapter opens, how would you describe the emotional/spiritual state of the people?**
2. **What was their first “official act” now that the wall is restored?**
3. **What was the attitude of the people toward the Book of the Law of Moses? (Helpful prompt: list at least three words describing their attitude.)**
4. **What did their attitude toward the Book of the Law of Moses cause them to do?**



TAKING IT INWARD

The Quick Background above describes Israel's story in six bullet-point segments. What about your story? What are four or five bullet-point segments that describe your story with God (bonus points for connecting these segments to your response to the Quick Background exercise in Day 1, recent events that have created a hunger for more God in your life)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What parallels do you see between your life segments and those of Israel?

Based on your recent encounters with the presence of God, in what ways do you find yourself having a response to the things of God (His Word, His Spirit) that is similar to Israel's in Nehemiah 8?



DIGGING DEEPER

The gospel of Matthew records an event similar to this scene in Nehemiah 8: people coming out of an event with potential to generate great spiritual momentum. In the case of Matthew, it is the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Jesus has just preached His sermon, Matthew 5-7, to a large crowd. Imagine being in that crowd hearing Jesus preach with authority, hearing the Beatitudes straight from Jesus' mouth, hearing in Jesus' own voice His words about being salt and light, turning the other cheek, loving your enemies, learning how to pray, and so much more. Imagine how soft your heart might be toward Jesus and the message of the gospel. Imagine not wanting the sermon to end as you get a sense that Jesus is wrapping things up. And then Jesus says these words below. In fact, read these words as if you are hearing them from Jesus. Because, well, you are hearing them from Jesus. To linger with this passage, circle any reference to "words" and underline anything that describes what Jesus' listeners (which includes you!) are to do with His words.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."



TAKING IT INWARD

Okay. Hopefully by now you are catching the point. Movements of God are sustained with an infusion of God's Word. Israel experienced restoration through a fulfilled promise of God. The listeners of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount were astonished at His teaching, having never heard someone teach with such power and authority. The people of Israel, under the guidance of Ezra (the teacher of the Law), were prompted to attentively read, and then study, the Book of the Law. Jesus' listeners were prompted by Jesus to "hear His words" and put them "into practice."

What similarities do you feel toward the people in Nehemiah 8 and the people who heard Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?

What is your heart saying about the role that God's Word plays in your life?

While the closing exercise below (Putting Into Practice) offers hyper-practical ideas to jump-start meaningful engagement in God's Word, take a few moments to journal your thoughts about adjustments you can make in your life to make space for meaningful engagement in God's Word.



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

In Nehemiah 8, following the national calamity of exile, God's people were soft toward God's written revelation. They wanted to know it (reading it attentively for half a day!), embrace it (they cried!), and do it (celebrating the Feast of Booths). In Matthew 7 Jesus' listeners were exhorted to hear and do Jesus' words, a one-two punch rhythm you see throughout the New Testament: hear these words, do these words.

Any spiritual nutrition must include God's written revelation, the Bible. If you're thinking "I'm not a reader," or "I only read the minimum to get by," then here's some good news: the Bible isn't so much a book to read (although that's great to do), it is a book to ruminate on, meditate on, ingest, and ultimately, do. To help with that, consider creating a Bible Bucket List you can do over the next month (and we've included some example ideas below).

Bible Bucket List Ideas:

- Speaking of the Sermon on the Mount: Create a "To Do" list out of all the instructions from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
- Go for a quick win: Own a one-chapter book of the Bible (e.g., Philemon, Jude). Look for answers to questions like: Why was the book written? To whom, and from whom? What's the situation the book is addressing? What's the big point?
- Speaking of "To Do" lists: Make a "To Do" list of all the practical tasks of obedience in the book of James.
- Ruminant on Jesus' farewell conversation with His disciples, John 13-17.
- Explore one of the Bible's great themes, tracing its roots in the Old Testament through the New Testament (i.e., redemption, sanctification, righteousness, atonement).

Or maybe you have a lot of questions about the Bible: its transmission, its inspiration, its authority. Let those be a part of your Bucket List quest. In fact, write out a list of questions. Add to them. Cross them off as they're answered. Following God is an invigorating and dynamic experience.

The word



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through the Word, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.



DAY 4: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

prayer

QUICK BACKGROUND

Check this out.

Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Luke 5:16

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 6:12

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Luke 9:28

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

Luke 11:1

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

Jesus makes it pretty clear that if we want true spiritual nourishment, we need to pray.



DIGGING IN

When we think about ramping up prayer, one of the first things to pop into our minds is simply this: time. But if we're honest, a busy calendar isn't always the reason we can't find time to pray. Maybe your prayer life has become cliché, even rut-like. Maybe you have so much built-up anger and frustration at God that prayer time just isn't productive. Maybe you're harboring something in your life that you know God isn't pleased with. Or maybe doubts have immobilized your faith. No matter the emotional or spiritual obstacle, you're not alone.

The passages below document a wide range of prayers and questions from a wide range of people in the Bible. As you read the passages (from your Bible or Bible app), look for the following bits of detail:

1. Who is praying or asking a question?
2. What's the nature of the prayer or question?

Psalm 73:1-17 (this is more like a testimony)

Habakkuk 1:1-4

Matthew 11:2-3

prayer

Matthew 27:45-46

John 18:37-38 (look for the question)

Acts 9:3-5



TAKING IT INWARD

Take a moment to reflect on the notes you made on each prayer. What life situations might each prayer represent (such as, doubt, silence from God, personal awakening)? Which of these are most representative of your current journey?



DIGGING DEEPER

As you might guess, the Bible has a lot to say about prayer and the subject content can be a bit overwhelming. Creating some bite-sized chunks may be helpful. The categories below represent a sampling of elements that can shape a vibrant prayer life. The passages in each category below are intended to provide stepping-stone guidance into what will hopefully be a lifetime of prayerfulness. And for those stretches of massive busyness when you suddenly realize you've gone without meaningful prayer for days (or months!), this exercise can be a lifeline to pull you back to a centered prayer life.

As you read each set of verses, take a moment to thoughtfully journal what God is impressing on your heart regarding your personal prayer life.

1. Prayer Posture of the Body:

Genesis 24:26-27 | Exodus 4:29-31 | 1 Kings 8:54 | Ezra 9:5 | Psalm 95:6 | Daniel 6:10 | Luke 22:41

2. Prayer Instructions:

Matthew 6:5-24

3. Prayer Examples:

Below is a list of what's known as The Seven Earnest Prayers (Thompson Chain-Reference Bible). These represent seven types of prayer found throughout Scripture, and can serve as a helpful framework for your personal prayer life.

prayer

The cry for help (Jacob): Genesis 32:26
The cry for intercession (Moses): Exodus 32:31-32
The cry for wisdom (Solomon): 1 Kings 3:7-9
The cry for cleansing (David): Psalm 51:1-2
The cry for the dying soul (thief on the cross): Luke 23:42
The cry for salvation (Philippian jailer): Acts 16:30
The cry for deliverance (Paul): 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

4. Prayer Time, Place, Frequency:

There is no better example than Jesus. Re-read the passages in Quick Background above and note where, when, and how Jesus prayed.

5. Prayer Posture of the Heart:

2 Chronicles 7:14 | Jeremiah 29:11-13 | James 5:16



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Don't let this day finish without taking a step to enhance your prayer life. Review your thoughts from the Digging Deeper exercise above and get hyper-practical by asking a question like:

How can I put these prayer examples into practice right now?



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through prayer, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

prayer



DAY 5: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

redemption

QUICK BACKGROUND

It's widely known that one of the keys to maintaining a fresh, vibrant relationship with Jesus is to maintain a sense of gratitude for that relationship. This can be tricky as the rigors of life settle in and our walk with God becomes a familiar routine. Thankfully, we have things we can do to keep our walk with God from becoming mechanical. Here is one of those things: stay fresh in understanding what Jesus has done on our behalf. While an understanding of what has been done for us can get complex (and be crammed with a lot of "-ologies" like theology, soteriology, and Christology), thankfully, one word sums it up: Redemption. And it doesn't even end in "-ology." So, let's try to understand it.

The concept of redemption shows up in many ancient societies. Its base meaning goes something like this: Someone's freedom is bought; the price for the freedom is considered a ransom paid. The "someone" could be a slave, a captive, or as in ancient Israel's case, someone who has sold themselves into servitude as a way out of poverty. That person can be later "redeemed" by a relative or even by themselves after they've saved some money. Land was also something that could be sold and later redeemed.

God built the idea of redemption into the Old Testament way of life. He used it to describe His actions toward Israel, which then served as the perfect set-up to help us understand His actions in the New Testament—redeeming creation through the work of His Son. In fact, the Greek word (the primary language of the New Testament era) that we translate redemption (*apolutrosis*) literally meant "to let go free for a ransom." But it's not just redemption on the cosmic level, it's redemption on the personal level: us. And it's not just our lives, but the bad things we've personally experienced from living in a world that has been held captive. An understanding of redemption is one of the key drivers to walking in gratitude for all that has taken place on our behalf.

Enough talk. Let's let God explain.



DIGGING IN

The passages below represent a cross section of the redemption story throughout the Bible, shown in the form of "firsts." As you read these verses (and yes, there are many verses; redemption is a big thing) from your Bible or favorite Bible app, simply make notes on your observations about redemption. And be sure to take each passage personally. (Note: Not every Bible version will use the words "redeem" or "redemption," but the "redemption" reference should still be pretty clear no matter what word is used.)

The first use of the word we translate "redeem":

Exodus 6:6

redemption

The first use of “redemption”:

Leviticus 25:23-27

The first hint of personal redemption:

Isaiah 9:1-7

The first confirmation of personal redemption:

Matthew 20:28

The first explanations of redemption:

Ephesians 1:7-8

1 Peter 1:18-21

The simplest explanation of redemption:

Romans 3:22-24



TAKING IT INWARD

Based on these verses above, how would you describe the concept of redemption to a close friend who knew nothing about the gospel? Take a few moments to journal your thoughts below.

As you can tell, one of God’s favorite things to do is redeem. But it’s not just the big redemptions as in redeeming creation and our lives; it’s also redeeming the bad in our lives. God has used the events of Israel to show us how redemption works. They were slaves to Egypt; He “redeemed” (God’s word) them, setting them free from slavery. This is what God does with the bad in our lives. Not only the bad that comes from the inside due to our own mistakes and bad decisions, but also the bad from the outside—pain we experience from circumstances beyond our control such as loss or disappointment. Any bad we’ve experienced can leave a mark. This mark has the potential to enslave us. We can be held captive to things like fear, hurt, regret, selfishness, cynicism, skepticism, emotional scars from mistakes—things that lead to spiritual malnutrition. God wants to free us from those things. He does this by redeeming the bad.

One of the New Testament uses of the word “redeem” comes in Ephesians 5:16 when we are told to “redeem the time.” This instance of redeem connotes a meaning of “make the most of opportunities.” Think about God making the most of all the bad in your life...God wastes nothing. Everything can be redeemed. So, what residue do you have from the bad you’ve experienced in your life? Using the suggestions in the above paragraph to jog your thinking, take a minute to write down anything that comes to mind—whether “the bad” that’s been caused by you or “the bad” that’s happened to you. Write in code if you want to keep things private, but you may want to consider sharing this with a trusted friend.



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Here, then, is the good news. You don’t have to be enslaved to the bad in your life. The Enemy, of course, will try to convince you otherwise, to keep you beaten down with feelings of dirtiness, inadequacy, hurt, etc. One of the will-breaking tactics of hostage-takers is to convince hostages that the outside world has given up trying to rescue them, that their families no longer care. This is what our Enemy does to us. It is a lie.

You...have...been...redeemed! If you need a visual, try this: picture the blood of Jesus dissolving the chains that hold you captive to those things that try to enslave you. That’s redemption. But here’s where a good thing gets even better: The bad in your life can be used for good. Once you have accepted your freedom, you are in a position to help others redeem the bad in their lives.

Check out 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 and finish your time by thanking God for your redemption and asking Him how your bad can be used for good.



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through redemption, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

redemption



DAY 6: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

suffering

QUICK BACKGROUND

You might be asking: Feeding your hunger through suffering? Really? Well, one of the biggest hang ups with Christianity is found in this oft-asked question: *If God is loving and in control, why is there so much suffering and pain?* (Even Habakkuk, as we saw in Day 4, asked this question.)

It's a logical question. But are we to hold God accountable for something He never explicitly promised, such as a life without suffering and pain? In fact, God pretty much promised the opposite: life will not be easy, especially if you seek to follow God. Granted, that is not a great recruiting slogan for Christianity. Maybe that's why that promise comes with an interesting and assuring follow-up promise. So, let's dig out that interesting and assuring follow-up promise.



DIGGING IN

As you ruminate on the verses noted below, make two lists using the far-left and the far-right columns in the table below. We'll get to the middle column in a few minutes.

1. In the far-left column, list all the hardships and difficulties that these verses tell us we can expect (one per row in the table).
2. In the far-right column, list any promises or assurances that accompany the hardships and difficulties.

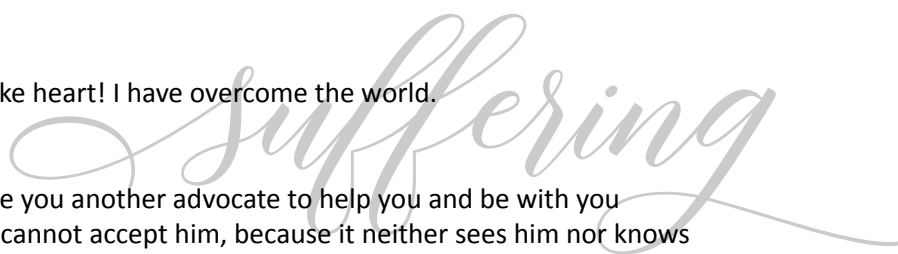
The hardships and difficulties we can expect:	Your personal hardships and difficulties:	Assurances that accompany the hardships and difficulties:

John 16:33 (Jesus speaking)

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 14:16-17 (Jesus speaking)

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.



Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 5:10-11

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

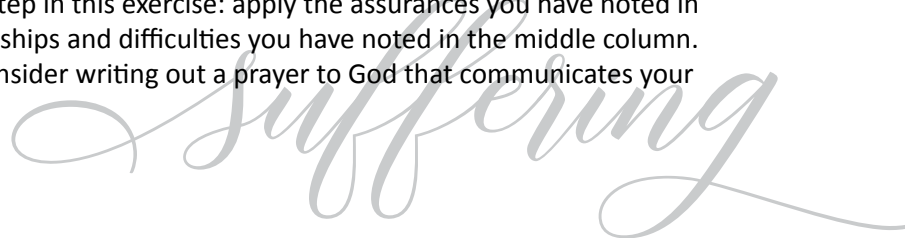


TAKING IT INWARD

Now we get to the middle column. Take a moment to process the hardships and difficulties Scripture tells us we can expect by connecting them to your personal hardships and difficulties. For each item you have listed in the far-left column, write in the middle column a personal difficulty you are experiencing, or have experienced, that is similar to what is described in Scripture. Here is an example:

The hardship and difficulties we can expect:	Your personal hardship and difficulties:
-the world cannot accept the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17)	-my work environment belittles the Christian faith

You may have already guessed the next step in this exercise: apply the assurances you have noted in the far-right column to the personal hardships and difficulties you have noted in the middle column. Take some time to do this prayerfully. Consider writing out a prayer to God that communicates your heart pertaining to each hardship.



With your prayers and these verses in mind (verses that cite the certainty of hardships but also the assurance that God is with us), wrestle with the questions below and journal your thoughts.

What have been your expectations of God? What have you expected Him to do in your life with regard to hardship and suffering?

Based on the verses you just experienced, what would be healthy expectations of God when we face hardship?

How can these verses help you form a theology of suffering—a framework for explaining and managing the suffering that we experience in light of the assurances these verses give us?



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

These verses give us two huge assurances: one for the present age and one for the age to come. With regard to the present age, God is with us. He is part of our hardships, giving us divine power and presence to help us withstand. With regard to the age to come, it won't matter what's happened in the present. We will be restored by Jesus, which will completely overwhelm the suffering we have endured in this present age (please check out 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Probably the biggest, and maybe only, assurance we can count on in difficult times, while in this present age, is that God is with us. We have not been promised a life free of difficulty. But we have been promised that we will not be separated from God. No matter what. God is with us.

The exercises above have focused on your personal hardships and difficulties, but close your time by thinking about the people around you. Has anyone in your sphere recently experienced loss? Health issues? Disappointment? How can you enter into these situations and convey the assurances you've just explored in Scripture? Take a moment to write in the space below any names or situations that come to mind. Then pray for guidance and wisdom as to how you can minister to these situations and can convey the truth you've just explored in these exercises.



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through suffering, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

Suffering



DAY7: FEEDING YOUR HUNGER THROUGH

obedience

QUICK BACKDROP

You know the story: Adam gets wife, wife eats fruit, wife shares fruit with husband who also chooses to eat, all hell breaks loose. Literally. The powers of hell literally did break loose on earth when man chose sin over God. We've been battling those powers ever since.

DIGGING IN

Disobedience brings consequences, destructive consequences that, as we learned through Adam and Eve, lead to death. On the other hand, obedience brings preservation, preservation that is life-giving. Maybe that's why we see God go to such great lengths throughout Scripture—from the Garden of Eden, to Israel's journey, to the Psalms, to Jesus, to the New Testament letters—to show us the destruction that temptation can lead to and the mind-blowing life that obedience can lead to.

The passages below represent different eras of God's revelation. Read these thoughtfully and prayerfully. Look for anything that teaches us about destruction that comes from disobedience and protection that comes from obedience. Jot down your observations. Yes, there are several passages, but don't be dismayed. Simply find a quiet place, grab some tea or a double tall latte, and let yourself ruminate on truth that can change, and preserve, your life.

Genesis 2:15-17

Deuteronomy 30:15-18

Psalms 119:33-37

Hebrews 2:18

Hebrews 12:1-3

1 Peter 5:8-10

James 1:13-18

TAKING IT INWARD

An ancient military maxim states very simply: *Know your enemy*. The verses above are a cross section of verses that give recon on our Enemy and the tools at Satan's disposal. What insight do these verses give you into sin and temptation?

obedience

If you've ever received a traffic ticket, you probably came out of that experience thinking that traffic laws—speed limits, stop lights—are in place to work against you, to make life difficult. In reality, speed limits are in place to protect you, not only from yourself, but from other drivers. It's easy to think of God's instructions to resist temptation in the same fashion—that those instructions are there to take the fun out of life. In reality, those instructions are in place to preserve your life, but not just preserve it, make it abundant.

So, what's your weak spot? Where are you most susceptible to temptation? Here's the plan: The next time you are tempted or enticed, simply ask this question: Will my next step (or click, or puff, or reaction, or _____) take me outside the protection of obedience? The answer will be obvious. Rationalizations will be seen for what they are.

It's important to know that temptations will never be presented in their fullness. They will always look like a piece of enticing fruit. In fact, there's a little phrase that puts it all into perspective:

Sin takes you farther than you intended to go.

You pay more than you intended to pay.

You stay longer than you intended to stay.



PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

There are two simple actions that will help you build strong protection and stay within the protection: stop and start.

Stop:

What would you like to stop doing—things Scripture says not to do, but you've been doing them, i.e., destructive habits and attitudes (Romans 7:14-25; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8)? Make a list below, write in code if you need to.

To help "stop doing," consider this mental exercise when you are presented with a temptation:

- 1. Ask:** *What am I feeling that's causing me to want to act on this temptation?*
- 2. Then ask:** *What is this feeling causing me to do?*
- 3. Then:** *Surrender that feeling to Jesus.*

Start:

What would you like to start doing—things Scripture says to do, but you haven't been doing, i.e., taking care of the "least of these," looking out for "widows in distress," espousing the fruit of the Spirit? (Matthew 25:37-40; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12; James 1:27)

We leave you with one more passage to experience, Matthew 7:24-27. When you look it up, you'll easily recognize it, but it may take on an entirely different meaning in light of all that you have just explored—chiefly, the truth that obedience leads to protection.



DIGGING EVEN DEEPER

For more help, resources, and insight on feeding your spiritual hunger through obedience, please visit www.inword.org/feeding-your-hunger.

obedience