

FORTY DAYS ALONE WITH GOD

**PRAYERS AND SCRIPTURE
TO CHALLENGE YOU TO
MORE PERSONAL DEVOTIONS**

**JAMES PARDUE
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

The time frame of forty days has a significant history in the Bible. It rained for forty days and nights when God destroyed the first civilization. Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days to receive the Ten Commandments. Jonah preached to Ninevah for forty days before they repented. Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days being tempted by the devil and recommitting himself to God's purposes for His life.

For these reasons, many people have looked on a forty-day time frame as one of seeking God's leadership, receiving new truths, and recommitment to God's purposes. This booklet utilizes the forty-day theme with a collection of prayers and Bible verses to encourage a fresh encounter with God.

The prayers are brief and are meant to be an encouragement for a more extended time to pray. They are "Prayer Starters." The Bible verse complements the prayer but should be read in context. On the back of each prayer is a journal for you to record God's communication to you on this day. It also provides a place to write any fresh comments or insights that have come to you as you have meditated.

All of us need special times of renewal. It usually does not come quickly. We need time to develop new habits, to let new truths be lived out, and to establish discipline. In forty days a totally new "you" will not emerge, but the possibility is that new doors of understanding and fresh resolves will emerge.

I have followed the style of other books of prayer and simply ended with an amen. All of our prayers are in Jesus' name, so you will understand that truth as you pray.

Jim Pardue

WILLING SERVICE

Father,

We have read that in Biblical times a slave who had been set free could choose to remain in the service of his master. If he chose to do so, he would have his ear pierced as a symbol of his new allegiance. No longer did he have to remain, but he did it because he wanted to.

Lord, we realize that is the kind of spirit You desire in Your service. You want us to serve You, not out of a sense of compulsion or duty but out of desire. Gratitude and thankfulness should be our motivation. Love is a far greater bond than duty.

The covenant You made with us in Jesus says, "I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds." That means our response to You will come from within and not because of a call to duty from without. We serve out of a spirit of deep desire.

We remind ourselves that serving You is our greatest joy and our deepest privilege. Help us today to think of what You have done for us and may we be filled again with thankfulness. While You could have planned to do Your work without us, You provided us the opportunity to be a part of it.

Forgive us for our complaints, for feeling we have to do something for You. Make love overflow us again.

Amen.

*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

Psalm 84:10

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

SINGING

Father,

When people began to realize the wonder of Jesus' coming they burst into song. The event was so great that the spoken word alone was incapable of capturing the feeling of their spirits. Only through the majesty of singing could they express the depths of their emotions. I am told that of all the religious people on earth, Christians have been the most captivated by music.

We are challenged to 'make melody in our hearts.' When we know You, we hear the tune of the Universe; and our hearts join in the music. Even if we are not talented with our vocal cords, we can resonate with song with our heart strings. Lord, create in us the joyful hearts that sing of You.

We think of the times Christians would sing. They sang in worship at nights, when they were in jail for preaching and when they observed the Lord's Supper. When they had views of heaven, they saw that it was filled with song; and they looked forward to joining the choir.

Help us today to sing because of joy and to glorify Your name. May others feel the music in our lives and see that whatever the circumstance, our joy is still present.

Amen.

*Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
with gratitude in your hearts to God.
Colossians 3:16*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

VALUES

Father,

We confess that we often confuse the value of things. Sometimes we put a higher price tag on things that are temporary and soon to be worthless than on those items which really last. We hold on to that which is:

- outward and not inward
- good for us and not good for others
- harmful instead of helpful

We ask You to help us to see the true values in life. We need Your power to put things in the correct order of priority.

You have said the three greatest treasures of life are faith, hope and love, which means that character is of more importance than possessions. Help us to invest in them. Teach us that people are more important than things. Remind us that family and friends matter more than the causes that dominate our time.

Forgive us for praying too much for trifles and selling cheaply that which is of greatest value. Today, Father, we need eyes to see.

Jesus taught us of a man who found a pearl and sold all he had to buy it. He knew the values of life. Remind us today of what we should get rid of in order to have what is most important.

Amen.

*Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things
will be added to you.*

Matthew 6:33

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

FOR OTHERS

Father,

Today I want to pray for someone else. I have to talk to You because they will not let me talk to them. Maybe I am too close or I am afraid it would harm our relationship. I have tried in the past to say something to them, and they have not listened. So today, I talk to You.

They need a deep change in their lives. There has been a turning from You and involvement in activities that are harmful to them. I realize they are opening themselves up to friendships which will pull them further from You, and they are falling under the power of destructive habits.

Lord, if they are going to be drawn back to You, You will have to do it. I do not know how You do Your work. Maybe You trouble their conscience. Perhaps they learn there is no lasting joy apart from You. You may raise up a friend that can speak. You may so shake their lives that they will see what is really valuable.

I do not know how You work, but I earnestly ask that in some way You touch their lives. I had rather they be hurt by You because healing can then come. I believe when I talk to You, things can be different. You love all of us and are working to keep us close to You.

So I close my prayer in faith. I claim Your concern and leave the method to Your wisdom.

Amen.

*This is my prayer, that you may be able
to discern what is best.*

Philippians 1:9-10

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

WARFARE

Father,

Remind us today that a part of our prayer life is warfare. You commanded us to put on the armor of God so we can stand against the schemes of the devil. And part of that armor is to 'pray in the Spirit on all occasions.'

So at times prayer is more than a praise and request session. It is standing against the evil one and claiming the victory that has been won by Christ. More than any other truth, the enemy wants us to forget this one. If he can get us to attack him with the wrong weapons or to live with lack of discipline in prayer, then he can win many battles.

Father, You have called us to be soldiers, not people of leisure. Our enemy is real and his power is strong. But You have defeated him in the cross and resurrection. So as we pray we know victory is possible.

We determine today that satan will not win spiritual battles uncontested. We claim those who have not yet turned to You. We place a hedge around those who are in You.

The enemy is strong, but You are the victor. We stand in victory. You have won, and day-by-day we claim the victory that is in Your name.

Amen.

*The kingdoms of the world have become
the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ.
Revelation 11:15*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

JUST YOU

Father,

We come today not to ask for anything. It is not that we do not have needs or that others do not need our prayers. But we simply want to meditate on You.

We come to enjoy Your presence and to find new strength as we think of Your power. We want to bless You instead of asking You to bless us.

Sometimes we are so busy doing good things that we forget You. We can even be so active in doing things for You that we ignore You. We are reminded that the parents of Jesus lost him in the temple. At times even at church we focus on others instead of You.

Our desire is just to be with You. Sometimes our greatest joy in life is just to be with those we love. There is no agenda--just enjoyment.

Help us, Father, to stop even in this prayer from planning new projects or from hearing the clamor of what we have not done. May we become quiet and reflect on You. And in our quietness may we find new strength and a deeper understanding.

We behold You and exalt You. May Your radiance shine around us as we reflect on Your glory.

Amen.

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord almighty,
who was and is and is to come.*

Revelation 4:8

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PRESENCE

Father,

Too often we think of Jesus as living in some other time frame than now. We imagine Him as a figure in history or as a Coming King. We are like the men who walked with Him on the road to Emmaus, "our eyes are shut so we do not recognize Him."

One vital reason we do not sense Him with us is that we have not understood that He is within us. He does far more than walk with us; He desires to live through us. We will never understand the comfort of His presence if we do not accept the challenge of His program. We are to become His channels to carry on His ministry.

He came to care for the lost, the lonely, the ill, the needy, and those shut out. When we allow Him to continue to minister through us, then we will sense Him most clearly. Our caring actions will remind us of Him, but He will also make Himself manifest in our caring deeds.

It is Mother Teresa who takes literally Jesus' statement "If you do it to the least of these you do it to me." She sees Jesus in disguise in every needy person. Lord, I will see You when I see You in others, and I will experience Your presence when I join You in Your work.

Amen.

*Stretch forth thy hand to heal...And when they prayed
the place was shaken by the Holy Spirit.
Acts 4:30-31*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

OBEDIENCE

Father,

We need to learn anew the central need of obeying You. Your Word is a clear record of Your commands and principles, and even though we hear Your voice, we go our own way. We rely on our strength and wisdom. We rationalize why we cannot do Your bidding.

Your Word is very clear on how You view disobedience. "It is as the sin of witchcraft and idolatry." I Samuel 15. You said that it is the essence of life outside of Christ (Romans 5). It is to say "no" to Your challenges, Your sovereignty and authority. It is a direct attack on Your wisdom and love.

The boy Samuel heard You speak and said "Speak, Lord, Your servant hears." Help us to have receptive minds and servant spirits. Teach us to be moldable in Your hands. May we be open to Your leading.

Lord, obedience is putting Your will above my own. It is being willing to let You direct my life. When I become aware of Your teachings I choose to follow them; and when I feel the influence of Your Spirit, I say, "Here am I."

You have said if we love You, we will obey You. So obedience is a love issue. Then I check my heart and say, "Lord, I do love You. What do You want me to do?"

Amen.

*To obey is better than sacrifice and
to do is better than offerings.*

I Samuel 15:22

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

GUIDANCE

Father,

Every day I make meaningful decisions. Sometimes they are big enough to shape and alter my direction. I may decide on a job, a place to live, or a new relationship. Most of the time they are much smaller but their cumulative effects are significant. They not only affect me but also my family, friends, or work place.

I realize that some decisions do not entail great consequences, but many set in motion forces that are hard to recall. If I knew how my choices would impact others or what their outcome would be it would be easier. But You have limited our vision by allowing us to see only today. So, Lord, one of my greatest needs is for You to provide guidance.

At times, my ego is so out of balance I see only my needs and not those of others. Then my decisions are made to satisfy me, and I cannot see the bigger picture. And sometimes, Lord, I do not know which way to go; and if You do not point the way, I am confused.

Take away my stubborn self-will, and illuminate my mind; and when I miss the way, do not let pride hinder me from taking a new course. Lord, set me on a true course, for I grow tired of life's demands and my blundering ways.

Amen.

*For Thou art my rock and fortress, therefore
for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.*

Psalm 31:3

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PRAISE

Father,

We want to spend time praising You. You do so much for us that we are constantly expressing our thankfulness. But today we come to praise You, not for what You give us but for who You are.

I remember when my children were small and I would go on a trip. When I returned they would ask, "What did You bring us?" One day when they were older I returned and realized they did not ask. Rather they said, 'We are glad You are back.' They valued the giver more than the gift.

Lord help us to grow up. We want to be with You, to enjoy Your presence and not to keep asking for presents. Today may we ask for nothing but simply be with You.

You are God from everlasting to everlasting. The nations are but dust on the scales in Your presence. We are wonderfully and marvelously made by Your power. You have the whole world in Your hands. We lift high Your name and exalt Your character.

Great Father, Loving Son, and ever-present Spirit, we praise You. We join all the created beings in Your presence--those persons who have already joined You and the other believers in the Kingdom to magnify You.

Amen.

*Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PEACE WITHIN

Father,

We come to claim Your way of realizing peace within our hearts. We find it in Philippians 4:6-7. You say "do not worry about anything." Worry means we do not have confidence in Your control. Remind us again of Your power.

You say, "In everything give thanks." Develop our faith to believe You are doing the best for us. Give us the capacity to see blessings in disguise.

You say, "in everything by prayer." Help us to keep a running dialogue with You in the big and small things. May we never feel we can handle circumstances apart from Your wisdom and power.

You say if we follow this way You will grant us peace. So we claim Your promise. Yours is a peace that is beyond comprehension. It guards our hearts and our thoughts and our emotions.

Thank You, Father, that in a world of confusion You can give us peace. When we become disoriented, You give us peace. When we grow weary and afraid, You give peace. It is Your gift. It does not rest in the circumstances but in Your hand. In truth, even when the situation should give us turmoil, You overrule and give us peace. Great God of Peace, we thank You for this great kindness.

Amen.

*My peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives, give I unto you.
John 14:27*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

ADVERSITY

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

Difficulties have always been a puzzle. When hard times come, we often do not understand the reason. Since we are in the middle of them we ask: Why did this happen to me?

I have begun to learn that You do not always give answers, but You do state purposes. It is a great source of comfort to me to know that there is meaning, even though I do not know how this event is part of it.

Recently I read one of those purposes in II Chronicles 32:31, which says, "God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart."

Now I see that adversity is one way of revealing what I really believe. It is easy to express my faith when all is going well. But what do I believe when all seems dark? Difficulties reveal what I really am.

Now I see a gleam. You want to know what I will do in the hard moments. Will I hold on to You even when I question Your motives? Really, what this verse teaches me is that You are testing my motives.

You want me to believe, not glibly but with conviction. So help me to accept Your test and I ask Your help in passing it.

Amen.

*Blessed is the person who perseveres under trial.
He will receive the crown of life.
James 1:12*

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

ENTHUSIASM

Father,

Often as we become older we grow more cautious. We say we have become more realistic. And it is true that inexperience can lead to rash decisions. But at times, our reluctance to act is because we have been disappointed so often that we have become cynical.

But, Father, surely You never meant for life to slowly drain us of our zest or our hope. We should be learning that the immediate does not always determine the ultimate. Our eyes should be more sensitive to seeing beyond the things that are seen to that which is not seen. Help us to know that the still, small voice of the Spirit cannot be silenced by the boom box sounds of our culture.

So today, brush away the cobwebs from our enthusiasm. Give us fresh hope in the power of prayer, in seeing lives that are changed and in the value of cooperative efforts. Remind us that like Elijah our knowledge of the hearts of others is limited. Help us to hear the music again so we can respond with renewed freedom.

And may we believe again that one person can make a difference — to know that God and one are a majority. May our Helper blow on the coals of our hearts until they blaze again.

Amen.

Caleb said, 'Give me the hill country.'
Joshua 14:12

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

BUILDING UP

Father,

One of the characteristics of our society is that it tears people down. We seem to take delight in pointing out the faults and failures of others. When others fall, we seem to want to push them down further. Like animals that catch the scent of blood, we go into a feeding frenzy when we detect someone has made a mistake.

People in the public eye seem to be our favorite targets. We seemingly do not want anyone to be above us. Our barbs are aimed at teachers, politicians, and successful people. All of it seems to be an attempt to elevate ourselves and to do with our tongues what we cannot do with our talents. Whatever the reason, Lord, many times we are mean and destructive. We find it easier to magnify what is wrong instead of commending what is right.

Father, forgive Your children for absorbing this spirit from our culture. Instill in us a helpful attitude. May we help people to rise up from failure and press on. Help us instill a hope instead of dumping criticism. May we practice forgiveness that focuses on tomorrow instead of on yesterday. May people in our presence be encouraged to strive for new goals because of our gracious spirit.

Amen.

God did this so that...we may be greatly encouraged.
Hebrews 6:18

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

THANKSGIVING

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

One of our greatest dangers is ingratitude. Ingratitude speaks of being unappreciative and even grumbling because You have not done more. It is the mean spirit describing those outside of Christ — "And they were not thankful."

So help me today to focus on the positive and not the negative. May I realize that all I have is because of Your grace. Teach me to be content with what I have which is far more than I deserve; and every so often put me in touch with those who have far less than I do so I can receive a healthy dose of reality. Heal my selfish and critical spirit.

Lord, I want to stop and thank You for what I take for granted; but may it be more than just material things. Thank You for loving me...dying for me...living in me...changing me...preparing a home for me. O Lord, thanks.

One day I will learn of all the things I did not receive that were some of my greatest blessings. You protected me from danger, guarded me from temptation and guided me when my wisdom was inadequate. I rejoice that all things are being worked for my good — the obvious, the unseen, the unknown.

So I come today into Your courts with thanksgiving and into Your gates with praise.

Amen.

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God.
1 Thessalonians 5:18

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

THOUGHTS

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

You have said, as a person thinks in his inner being, that is what they become." So I need Your help in altering my thought patterns so I can become more like You.

Help me first to be sensitive to what I allow to enter my mind. May I watch what I read, what I hear, and what I see. When I have a choice, may I turn away from images and words that would pollute my mind. There is so much good; help me to focus on it.

Help me practice the expulsive power of positive thoughts. As I fill my mind with good things, I know they will push out the wrong. May I think of what is good, noble and beautiful.

Help me to saturate my mind with Your Word. It speaks of the washing of water by the Word. It cleanses and changes. As I meditate, the principles of faith will push out fear and hope will replace despair. And as I memorize Your Word, it will stand as a guard over my thoughts.

Lord, every day I clean my body, and regularly I clean the areas around me. Yet I will go for years with slights remembered and fears cherished. So today, I start throwing out and cleaning up. I want the meditation of my heart to be pleasing to You.

Amen.

*Meditate on the Book of the Law day and night,
then you will be prosperous and successful.
Joshua 1:8*

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

GROWTH

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

Your goal for Your children is to become like Jesus. I remember the story of a man who sculptured an elephant out of stone. When asked how he did it, the reply was, "I just cut away everything that did not look like an elephant." You are cutting away everything that does not look like Jesus.

I know the process is really both negative and positive. There are many things You must help me put out of my life: the wrong desires, the selfish actions. But, there are character traits You must put in like humility and obedience. Too often we evaluate our goodness by what we do not do rather than by what we do.

I am learning that You are accomplishing Your task by inward and outward forces. The inner power is the Holy Spirit. He is giving me new strength and fresh desires. He is teaching me Your principles and sharing with me Your promises.

The outward forces are the circumstances I confront and the people I meet. Lord, help me to know that at times You will put me in exact opposite circumstance so I will have to make character-developing choices. For example, You will teach us love by putting us around unlovable people.

Lord, may I see people as Your gift to me and circumstances as Your hands shaping me. Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. Move me, make me — after Your will.

Amen.

Do you remember how the Lord led you and humbled you to show whether or not you would obey Him.

Deuteronomy 8:2

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

QUESTIONING

Father,

Your goal for our lives is to mold within us a great spirit. A spirit that has deep roots of faith is steadfast in purpose and triumphant when faced with difficulties.

It is in the matter of difficulties that questions are raised in my mind. Sometimes they come from people I would never have suspected. I had counted on them, but they are standing in the way. At other times, I feel caught in the path of circumstances that seem to be careening towards me like a runaway car; so I feel angry and frustrated.

At times, I question what You are doing in my life. I ask why am I in this circumstance? What are You teaching me when my relationships with others are strained?

I cannot believe how I often respond to what You are seeking to accomplish. I will let self-pity defeat Your plans.

You could have made a world without difficulties; but since difficulties are here, they must have a purpose. I am learning that only through them can You continue to develop my spirit.

So, Father, help me to become a spiritual chemist; to transform difficulties into blessings and troubles into growth. Strengthen me to have a spirit that rises over problems and, in the process, become a better person.

Amen.

We rejoice in our trouble because they produce perseverance and perseverance, character.

Romans 5:3,4

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

URGENCY

Father,

We are so slow in responding to the spiritual challenges of our day. There are more people without Christ than ever due to the population explosion.

Crime grows with the increased use of drugs.

Abortions multiply because of sexual irresponsibilities.

Technology provides us new ways to defraud our neighbors.

Abuse of women and children seems to grow like a cancer.

But we seem content to continue at the same level of response while needs greatly increase. We move at an oxcart pace in a jet age.

Father, we ask Your forgiveness for offering plates that do not keep pace with inflation. Forgive us for twisting our faith into a prosperity cult instead of using part of our blessings for others.

Forgive us for thinking only of pleasure instead of having time for the problems of others.

Father, give us a shove today. Increase our sense of urgency.

Remind us that the night is coming when no person can work.

Amen.

Buy up the time for the days are evil.
Ephesians 5:16

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

WISDOM

Father,

Today, I come to ask for wisdom. There are before me choices that are not easy to make, and pressures are mounting for my answers. My difficulty is that the decisions are not between right or wrong, but in deciding what is the best way. I have received conflicting information, and I do not like any of the options open to me. The issues that can be painted black or white are becoming easier, but these gray ones confuse me.

There is a big difference between wisdom and information. Information is a collection of facts. Wisdom is knowing how to put them in their right priority. Facts are often colored by prejudice and custom. Wisdom sees the big picture beyond the immediate and catches a glimpse of what is important. Lord, I have an overview of facts. It is making an outline for the future that confounds me.

When You asked Solomon what he desired, he asked for wisdom. You were so pleased with that request. You not only granted it but promised other rewards as well. I ask for the best thing. Shine Your light upon my path. Give me eyes to see. May I listen for Your voice. Keep from me the need to build my ego. May I be more interested in what You want than in the demands of the moment.

You have said the door to wisdom is to acknowledge You. So now as I close, I open my life to You.

Amen.

*In all your ways acknowledge Him
and He will direct your path.*

Proverbs 3:6

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PROUD SPIRIT

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

Forgive me for speaking too often in general and simplistic terms. I look at complex questions that have baffled competent people and with a glib tongue give the idea that I could solve them in a moment. I question why leaders cannot see the answers that seem so simple to me. It is strange to me that others have not seen it before.

Help me today to temper my remarks. Slow down my tongue. Forgive my hasty conclusions and criticisms. Remove me from the soap box of my pride. Give me the capacity to see from the other person's viewpoint. Teach me to be sympathetic and not so harshly critical.

Father, it is easy to get a case of the "simples." Simple answers for complex problems. Maybe the problem is that I really do not understand the depth of the problem. Let me understand that too often I see answers and not people.

Lord, there is enough rhetoric. We are drowning in words. We give angry answers to problems that call for a loving hand. We draw lines. We condense great positions to bumper stickers. Question my spirit. Teach me to listen. Help me to contribute an understanding spirit and a willingness to be of service instead of just giving glib answers.

Amen.

*In the multitude of words, there is sin
but he that is wise holds his tongue.*

Proverbs 10:19

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

COASTING

Father,

One of my big problems is that I want an easy religion. I want the blessings but not the burdens. My desire is for You to take my problems and not give me any more challenges. I am interested in Your helping me but not in my helping You. It is easy for me to give thanks for Your blessings but difficult to ask for any assignments.

I know that Jesus taught that the way to the good life comes through denial, discipline and cross bearing. The riches of the Christian life cannot come without effort. The easy way condemns me to a life of shallowness. To shun adventure and avoid risks, produces a childish faith. If I have an easy religion — I have to carry it. A deep one carries me.

Show me, Father, the value of exertion and the glory that comes through sacrifice. Teach me again that in losing life I find life and that out of bearing crosses come crowns. Let me understand what Jesus meant when he said, "A grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die, if it is to bring forth grain." That has been my problem, Lord. I wanted to take shortcuts, and I wanted the fruit without the dying.

Forgive me for coasting, Lord. Give me a fresh understanding of how the spiritual life is found. Remind me that out of brokenness comes blessings. Open my eyes and give me a push. I need to get started.

Amen.

I press towards the goal for the prize in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:14

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

DISAPPOINTMENT

Father,

One of the most difficult situations I face is how to handle disappointment. My hopes have been dashed. My goals will not be reached. The opportunity I had hoped for did not come through. I feel I am at the bottom looking up.

Lord, help me to learn some lessons from the bottom. Help me to know You are there. I have been wondering where You are. Remind me that the two tracks of footprints show You have been carrying me.

Enable me to understand that all circumstances are filtered through Your permissive Will and that You are working in them all for my good.

Strengthen me so that these events will not rob me of the joy that You have placed within me. Teach me to become more sympathetic to others who have passed through similar dark valleys. And let me learn that some of life's greatest treasures are built from broken pieces.

Father, even at the bottom, I can begin to dream again. The forces may be difficult, but with new wisdom, that may be a better course. There is still a contribution I can make to others and You - if nothing else, how to handle disappointment.

Here is my hand, Lord. Help me to get up.

Amen.

You meant it for bad but God turned it to good.

Genesis 50:20

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PERSPECTIVE

Father,

We are aware that being a Christian does not mean that we are exempt from the normal and, at times, the difficult circumstances of life. But what it does mean is that we have a different understanding of their purpose. We begin to look at life from a different perspective.

For many people life is a collection of fate and chance. They are born under certain stars. The rocks emit special powers. The psychic consults the road map already laid out. The word "luck" dominates their conversation. Lord, You can almost hear the metallic sounds of the grinding gears of an impersonal universe.

But, Lord, when we read Your Word, we see You involved in our lives. We feel the warmth of Your presence, and we learn that all things work together for our good. We are not caught in some mechanical monster but are in the hands of our loving Father.

Sometimes we do not understand the why of things. People of faith have questioned forever. While we do not know why, we know You. We have seen Your love in Jesus. We can live at times in mystery, because we know understanding is not always necessary if we can trust You.

So today, trusting and rejoicing in You, we commit ourselves again to You and for Your purposes in our lives.

Amen.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth.
Colossians 3:2

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

BEING LOVED

Father,

I am a person You love. You love me, as Victor Hugo said, "in spite of being myself." Even when I ignore You or run away from You, Your love still is constant and prevailing.

You came looking for me to bring me to Yourself. You died for me before I even knew You. And even when I rebel as Your child, You still love me. In fact, the reason I feel free to come back is because I know You had not changed. You love me not because I am lovable but because You are love. Your love does not come to me on the basis of who I am but because of who You are.

Father, that is why I am losing my desire to be rebellious. I know my wrong actions break our fellowship. The cross is a constant reminder of the suffering my sin brings to You. And, Lord, I do not want to hurt You any more. Because You love me, I am learning to love You in return.

Lord, fear brought me to You at first. Then it was Your commands that kept me trying. But now, Lord, it is who You are, the Lord of love, that made me want to serve You. It is the cords of love that bind me.

Your faithful love is expressed in a hymn I often sing, "O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee."

Amen.

*God showed His love for us in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

FORGIVING OTHERS

Father,

You have met my deepest need, You have forgiven my sins. To forgive is far more than to erase my record, it is to restore my fellowship with You. You now act towards me as though I had not disobeyed Your command.

At first, I thought that was easy for You to do. But now I am learning how difficult it was. I had someone to sin against me. It was not that I misunderstood; rather, the act was done out of malice. Then, an apology came and a desire to rebuild our friendship.

But I wondered if I wanted a relationship with such a person. I wanted to express anger. I desired to be spiteful. I was hurt, and I was not anxious to get over it too quickly. I felt he ought to pay for awhile.

Then I realized, Lord, that forgiveness came at a price to me. It cost my pride and my self-will. I put a high value on my desire to get even.

So when I think of You, I know now forgiveness is the hardest thing You do. You could speak a world into being but to forgive cost the life of Your Son. Forgiveness comes through a cross - How costly!

Help me through my experience to appreciate Your mercy and may I learn how to be a forgiver.

Amen.

If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 6:14

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

STRENGTH

Father,

I am tired of flabby resolutions, of promises never kept, of regrets because I did not live up to my commitments. But I want more than forgiveness for being weak. I desire strength so I can become strong. No longer do I want to look up at good from the bottom of failure. I want to look down at sin from the height of temptation resisted.

One of my big problems has been that I have been trying to "carry you." I thought that You offered forgiveness for my past but then it was up to me to live for You. So I tried to be sincere and do my best. And when I felt I had let You down, it showed I was trying to hold You up.

But now I am learning that the Christian life is not hard but impossible. And You never asked us to live it in our own strength. You did not come to give us weights but wings. The Christian life is lived in Your strength. It is far more than forgiveness from our past. It is also strength for our daily needs.

So teach us to rest in You. To let You exhibit Your power. Today, help us to refocus. May we not look at ourselves, but You; not at how weak we are but how strong You are. May we not bemoan our inadequacies but celebrate Your power. And may we claim the truth, "we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength." So for cleansing I thank You, but for strength, I praise You.

Amen.

Now to Him who is able to do far more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.
Ephesians 3:20

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

THE NOW

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

Satan uses many tactics to delay the right. One of his biggest tools is the old adage, "It is a good idea, but the time is wrong." He agrees that the principle is right, that the idea is sound, but it will not work now. So we become paralyzed waiting for some ideal moment.

But one day we realize that there is never an ideal time. Circumstances have always been in a turmoil. The future is always uncertain. The image of a cartoon comes to mind. An old couple, bent with age, is tottering toward the wedding altar. Someone asked why they waited so long to marry. Their reply was "they were waiting for the right time."

Lord, help us to know that if You have issued a command, it is always the right time. We are so limited in assessing circumstances, we cannot tell what tomorrow will bring. So if we feel Your clear direction, help us to move out.

Give us the courage we need to act. Forgive us for being frozen into inactivity. Remind us that You make a way when there is no way.

There is so much wrong that needs to be opposed, and so many people who need to be helped, do not let us delay.

So here goes, Lord, stepping out on Your command!

Amen.

Be very careful how you live, not as unwise but wise - making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:15-16

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

HUMILITY

Father,

Your Word teaches that to become great in Your kingdom, we must become like a little child. The little child is trusting, open to learning, and not so carried away with a sense of his own importance. Lord, we need to be taught again that kind of humility.

Help us to realize how dependent we are upon You. Give us a sensible view of our abilities. Do not let us become overcome with a sense of our own importance. Warn us about the lure of prestige, of being carried away with titles, of thinking that a full resume brings a meaningful life. Remind us of the indebtedness we owe to others who have come before us so we will not think we achieved by ourselves.

Forgive us for our self-sufficiency and the desire to impress others unduly. Often we want a room of mirrors so we can see only ourselves. We will not listen because we feel we know the answers. Remind us that the person who thinks himself superior is opening the door to a fall.

The Scripture says that You resist the proud but lift up the humble. The reason is that the overly proud person feels he does not need You. So in Your love, You give him experiences that remind him that he is not adequate for all circumstances. So grant us a spirit of humility. Give us grace that we can share the spotlight with others and live with dependence on You.

Amen.

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.
James 4:10

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

PRIORITIES

Father,

The Apostle Paul spoke of the "one thing I do." People have understood this single mindedness as one of the keys to his spiritual genius. His one desire was to know You and to share the message about Jesus.

Lord, when I read this, the barrier to my spiritual growth becomes obvious. I lack a focus. There are many things that claim my interest and often they conflict with each other. I dabble in scores of things. At times, I want the best of this world even if I am not rich in eternity. Sometimes I want Your will done, but in other times, my desires come first.

So, help me to keep my priorities straight. Teach me to make an outline and put first things first. Enable me to say no to good things if they are in conflict with the best things. Forgive me for majoring on the trivial and living for the immediate. Show me the true worth of things.

Lord, I need a sense of direction, a spirit to evaluate my life and then to give myself to the eternal and the important.

Amen.

I must work the works of Him that sent me.
John 9:4

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

HOPE

Father,

I am grateful for the hope we have in You. Hope encourages an expectation of a brighter future. It says that things do not have to remain the same. It strengthens me to know that in You, events are being shaped in a pattern and that the pattern is good.

Sometimes our hope grows weak. Evil seems so strong, prejudice so hard to change, and patterns of hostility are passed from one generation to another. When we make some impact on one generation, we look behind us and there is a younger one making the same mistakes and sometimes even making matters worse. Lord, help us not to feel that hope is like whistling in a graveyard.

Lord, Christian hope is not "I hope so." It is not fantasy or make-believe. It is based on the solid promises in Your word. A promise is Your commitment to us based on Your integrity and power. What You say will come to pass. With Your promise I am not living today and hoping for tomorrow, I am claiming tomorrow and living in light of it today.

So thank You for the certainty of Your guiding hand. Thank You for the future - and for hope!

Amen.

*Now we have a better hope,
for Christ makes us acceptable to God.
Hebrews 7:19*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

OUR REQUESTS

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

I am reminded of the little girl who kept nagging her parents for a toy. Finally, they gave it to her but noticed later she was unhappy. "Why are you sad?" they asked. "Did you not receive what you asked?" "Yes," she replied, "but now I do not want what I got."

Sometimes, Father, we are like that child. We are so unwise in our longings. We desire things that will not bring us happiness. We seek the temporary instead of the worthwhile. We are blinded by what glitters and not by what is good. And when we receive what we asked for, sometimes we realize it has little value. It is not really what we want.

So give us wisdom in our desires. Help us to get our priorities straight and see the true value of things. Let us see the long view of things. Forgive us for being hedged in by today only and not seeing life in the light of eternity. Grant us the broad view of life. Help us learn from others and not be limited only to our experiences. And, Lord, give us the deep view of things. Let us not be consigned to a life of shallowness.

Father, filter my desires by the priority of Your kingdom and thanks for not giving me some of the foolish things for which I have asked.

Amen.

*You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.
James 4:2*

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

FORGIVENESS

Father,

One of the greatest gifts of Your love is that You forgive sin. Sin is rejecting Your authority and establishing our own constitution. It is doubting Your goodness and depending on our abilities. It is ignoring You and withdrawing from Your presence. And not once but regularly, not cheaply but with great cost, You forgive us. It is not based on our merit but on Your mercy. What a gift — Your liberating, cleansing, forgetting forgiveness.

Help us to understand that forgiveness waits for us to face our sins honestly. Confession is agreeing with Your assessment of our condition. But, Father, that is so hard. We want to play the blame game. We blame the situation and transfer our guilt to others. The three hardest words to say are, "I have sinned."

But only with this admission can forgiveness come. We must admit our sin if we are to find healing. So, let me now confess that often I let my desires overrule my knowledge. I, at times, find evil more interesting than good. But I have found what everyone discovers — evil is deceptive, and it never delivers what it promises. I have hurt myself and others. Now I know, Your way is the right way. So I say it now, "I have sinned. Forgive me."

Amen.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Psalm 32:1

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

LOVING PEOPLE

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

Father,

Many times it is difficult genuinely to love people. Some are rude, some are lazy, some are very selfish. I remember the young person who insulted the old man who was not moving fast enough. And I remember the woman with a black eye because her husband beat her. Lord, it is hard to love some people.

But, we have a tremendous problem. How can we love those who are unlovable? Yet when I stop to think about it, that's how You love. You love all people regardless of who they are or what they have done. My question, Father, is how do You do that?

Now I catch a glimmer. You love because of who You are and not what we are. Your love is given not because we are lovable but because You are loving. The kind of love You have is not an emotion or reaction but a spirit that cannot help but love.

So if I am going to love all kinds of people, I am going to have to possess Your kind of love. I am going to have to become like You.

I ask today that since I have difficulty in loving some people, would You love them through me until I learn how to love like You? Great God of love, so dwell in my heart today that I can begin to love others.

Amen.

*Walk in love, as Christ loved us.
Ephesians 5:2*

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

BLOOM WHERE PLANTED

Father,

One of our greatest difficulties is to see the privileges that are close at hand. We often dream about past experiences and future hopes and fail to capture the beauty of this moment. Sometimes we wish we were with others and fail to see the good qualities of our present acquaintances.

We confess that we can never be what You want if we only live in our dreams or in our memories. We acknowledge that often looking at the horizon is an escapism from the challenges of today. We realize that often we pass by hurt humanity on the side of the road, because getting where we are going is more important than seeing life in the immediate.

So help us to be grateful for our circumstances. If You have placed us here, then it is a place of worth and challenge. Help us to express appreciation for those who are around us. Let me know that I may have been sent to help them or they are Your gift to me.

So convict us of the sin of "tomorrowitis." Calm our spirits. Help us to see the present, the now, and those who are with us. And help me to see You - today!

Amen.

*For this cause I left you in Crete
to set things in order.
Titus 1:5*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE

Father,

Nobody expected Your Son to come as a baby. How that ought to sharpen again our sense of astonishment. You speak in the unexpected and in the unusual. You break out in ways we think are impossible. We see some of Your greatest purposes being worked out in our most difficult circumstances. We understand more of Your ways when Isaiah tells us that out of the stump of Jesse the Messiah would come. When it seemed impossible, Your great miracle occurred.

Forgive us when our relationship with You becomes commonplace and we worship at the altar of the ordinary. Help us to listen for You from unexpected sources. May we see You in places we would never imagine. Create the spirit of Jacob in us that says, "Surely the Lord is in this place even though I did not know it." Teach us never to lose our spirit of amazement.

So, Father, brush off the cobwebs of our amazement. Cleanse us from the tendency of putting You in the box of our expectations. Excite us again with the adventure of Your way. O, Lord, my Lord, the whole creation sings of Your creation. Strum the cords of my heart again, and thank You again for the surprise of Jesus.

Amen.

*I strain to reach the end of the race and
receive the prize for which God is calling us.
Philippians 3:14*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

SEEING PEOPLE

Father,

One of our greatest errors is that we treat life, the miracle of Your creative power, as insignificant. We trivialize it and make it cheap. We do it to ourselves. On the scales of life we feel we weigh little and put on the tag that says, "For sale, cheap."

Because we have such a low opinion of ourselves, we treat others as cheap. We downgrade them, place them in inferior positions and see them only as means to our ends. They become the butt of our jokes, and we laugh at how You made them. Often as they struggle to stand up to their true dignity, we give them a careless push instead of a helping hand.

When we read Your estimation of life, it is always costly. You value us so much that You were willing to let Your Son die for us. And, Lord, we know that Your estimation of our worth is where we find our true value. It is not our gender, our age, the color of our skin, but a person made and loved by You.

Help us to see the great worth of all people. Give us eyes to see beyond the 'accidents of their birth' and see their true value. And remind us that if You died for them we should never by word or deed treat them as unimportant.

Amen.

*If you call a person an idiot,
you are in danger of the council.
Matthew 5:22*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

DISCOURAGEMENT

Father,

The Scripture says "He will not be discouraged 'til He establishes justice on earth." That truth amazes me. There is so much that would seem to discourage You - the rebellious acts, clenched fists shaken in Your face, the spirit of indifference, where flabby wills are unable to be aroused; the spirit of ignorance caused by calling black, white.

But You do not give up. You do not lose hope. You continue on. Thank You for Your eternal persistence. You believe that one day we will fly like lost birds back to Your nest.

Father, I need that quality in my life. At times, I have great enthusiasm; at other times, I feel like quitting. I suffer chills and fever in my Faith. Often obstacles make me turn away, and a word of criticism drains my resolution. Often I will maintain the forms of commitment, but inside, drudgery and monotony are my companions.

I need to see life from Your perspective. I have a chicken-little mentality, that is fearful of the sky falling. Help me to see Your strong will and purpose and to know that You are ultimately in charge.

Remind me that Your kingdom is coming. Forgive me for being an emotional atheist. Today stiffen my spiritual backbone. You are not only the Alpha but the Omega.

Let me sing with conviction, "Jesus shall reign wherever the sun does his successive journey run."

Amen.

*The Lord has given us the land. Do not
be afraid, do not be discouraged.
Deuteronomy 1:21*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

YOUR WILL

Father,

As a twelve-year-old, Jesus said, "I must be about my Father's business." And when He was about to die, He said, "Not my will but Thine be done." All of His life, His only desire was to do Your will. I remember it is said that Jesus was the only person who did what He wanted and what He wanted was always Your will.

I know, Father, that is what You want from me. Your goal for my life is obedience, a desire to do Your will, a willing spirit to serve You. You said that the test of authenticity was not those who say, "Lord, Lord," but those who do the will of the Father in Heaven.

So help me to do Your will, even when I do not think I can, or want to, or when it doesn't fit my limited theology. Forgive me when I place my wisdom above Yours. Do not let me rationalize away my disobedience. Forgive me for excusing my wrong actions because I blamed someone else.

Remind me, Father, that a double-minded person is unstable in all his ways. Take away from me vacillation and changing priorities.

I acknowledge that Your will is always right and always best. I will place boundaries around my thoughts and actions that are set by Your will. Now I yield myself to Your wisdom and to Your will.

Amen.

I come to do thy will, O God.
Hebrews 10:7

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

THE WALK

Father,

I am always grateful for the new things I learn about You. Your Word is a constant source of amazement to me. Old truths become as fresh as the morning dew.

Yet, I need to be reminded that knowledge is not enough. It must be translated into my daily walk. When Jesus spoke his final words, He said that we were to teach others to do all things, not just to learn all things. Your truth changes our lifestyle, not just our opinion. Your Word is not a therapy to adjust my moods, it is a power to change my life.

The Scripture said that the Word became Flesh. So today, I ask that Your incarnation continue to take place in my life. Help thy Word to become flesh in me. May I be a demonstration of kindness, patience and compassion. And create in me a right spirit and pure thoughts, for I know Your life will not shine through me if my life is unclean.

A little boy said that his parents talked about germs, Santa Claus, and God, and he had never seen any of them. There are many ways to see You, Lord, but one of the best ways is through another life that reflects Your character. Help me today to be that kind of person. Remind me that I may be the only Bible others may read.

Amen.

For as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.
James 2:26

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

ENCOURAGEMENT

Father,

I remember a man in the Bible who was given a nickname. He was called the Encourager. He always saw the hidden talents in people and, like a coach, helped them develop to their potential.

Father, that is the kind of person I want to be. There are so many who see the bad and who discourage legitimate aspiration. There are those who say, "It cannot be done." They are always in the objective mood. But I want to see the best and to help others dream the unrealized.

Help me today to take a stand against the negative and to accent the positive. May I encourage the weary person to continue on. Let me help the discouraged to stand firm. Help all that I meet to feel better about themselves and their lives.

There is an old story that the devil planned an auction for all his tools. But when the day came for the sale, he left one tool off the list. When asked why, he said, "This is my prize. When all else fails, I use it. So I will keep it." It was called discouragement.

May those who have dropped out, or copped out, see new opportunities. Let them see Your hand at work. Move them from self pity, false guilt and limited vision. Let me help give them new hope. Give me, Father, the gift of encouragement.

Amen.

*"Set aside Joshua and encourage him, for he shall
lead the people to conquer the land."
Deuteronomy 3:28*

GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME TODAY

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE THEME:

I MADE THESE DECISIONS TODAY:

