

GOD
in

— **we trust** —

Psalm 37

Grace Church

21 Days of Prayer & Fasting

Daily Devotional Guide 2017



Focus on Prayer 2017

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A Word from P. Ed...

Dear Grace Church, It is always a joy to greet you, for it is one of the greatest pleasures of my life to be one of your pastors. I want to share a few lines from my heart to yours concerning our 2017 fasting and prayer time. We have named this prayer time ***In God We Trust***. It comes out of Psalm 37.

This will be the fifth annual prayer and fasting in which we have participated. Each year it seems that God has grown us in this particular ministry. A number of you have shared the powerful things God has done during these times.

Over the past two years, our vision at Grace has been stated **“together becoming fully devoted followers of Christ.”** In order to become **FDFOC** we have to have an increasing hunger for the things that are dear to God’s heart. Jesus says “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6) Is there a hunger and thirst for the things of God in your heart? Can you say “as the deer pants after the flowing streams so my soul pants for you, O God!” ? (Ps 42:1)

Perhaps there has been an occasion when someone said to you **“don’t be nibbling or you’re going to spoil your appetite.”** Yes, it does. The same is true spiritually. Sometimes we tend just to nibble on God’s truths rather than to sit down for a full course meal from Him. That is what an intentional time of fasting and praying is like. It is sitting down to a full course conversation with God. It is blocking out all the distractions and nibbling. Then for a designated period of time we put more focus on reading the word, listening to God, and sharing with Him our thoughts and prayers.

Fasting is a way to deepen that conversation. There does seem to be a connection between physical and spiritual hunger. When we are satisfied physically, it tends to squelch the appetite spiritually. When we fast and feel the hunger pangs, it serves as a reminder of our desire to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Jesus was known for his periods of fasting and prayer.

Fasting is not a way in which we twist the arm of God to give us certain things. Rather **fasting is an act of faith.** Faith that God hears our prayers. Faith in the reality that as I quiet the distractions in my life, the voice of God is heard more clearly. Faith that God will act in response to my prayers according to His wisdom. And His answer will always reflect the good and best thing for me, though the answer may not be what I prayed for.

What would be the purpose of your fast? Here are several suggestions.

1. You may have a major decision to make, and you can spend this 21 days fasting and praying about that decision.
2. Perhaps there is some danger or threat that you would like to avert. There are numerous examples in the Bible of fasting for safety from danger.
3. To express repentance and grief for sin.
4. To ask God to help you continue to grow as a fully devoted follower of Christ.
5. As an act of spiritual discipline.

I'm sure you can think of more reasons to fast. Would you join me and the Elders of Grace Church as we seek the wise counsel and will of God in our lives individually and in our church corporately?

My prayer for you during this time is like the prayer Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus. (Ephesians 3:14-20)

I bow my knees to you God and ask that you would grant to each of us strength through your Spirit in our inner being. I pray Father that Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith and that we all may have strength to comprehend the vastness of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Oh Father, would you fill us with all the fullness of Christ. I pray this prayer knowing that you are able to do far more abundantly than anything I can imagine or ask. Father I ask according to your power that works within us that you would grant unto us, during this 2017 time of fasting and prayer, every ability to glorify the name of Jesus Christ. For it is in his name that I pray, amen.

May God use these 21 days to grow us and glorify Christ!

Pastor Ed Scarce



Grace Church 21 Days of Corporate Fasting and Prayer

Grace Church's time of corporate fasting and prayer begins on **Sunday, January 15** and continues through **Sunday, February 5**.

Special Event:

You are encouraged to join us:

Saturday, January 14th from 3pm-6pm

at Grace Church for a very special time of prayer & fellowship.

Thursday Fasts

During these 3 weeks, the elders are asking that we devote each Thursday to fasting and prayer as a corporate effort to seek God.

Corporate fast dates include . . .

Thursday, January 19

Thursday, January 26

Thursday, February 2

Fasting on each of these Thursdays will involve **abstaining from food for breakfast and lunch. During the time we would normally spend in preparation or eating the meal, it is important to use that time to pray and to read God's Word.** For example, if you normally spend 20 minutes preparing and eating breakfast, use that 20 minutes to pray and read Scripture instead.

If you are unable to participate in the corporate fast on Thursdays, you are welcome to choose another day of the week to seek God through fasting and prayer.





What is Biblical Fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline in which believers abstain from food for the spiritual purpose of intensifying our hunger for God and aligning our hearts with His!

Fasting aligns our hearts with God by demonstrating our HUMILITY before Him. (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10)

Fasting aligns our hearts with God through our REPENTENCE and CONFESSION of sin. (1 Samuel 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27)

Fasting aligns our hearts with God by acknowledging our sole DEPENDENCE on Him. (Deuteronomy 8:2-3; Matthew 4:1-4)

Fasting aligns our hearts with God by discerning His WILL and DIRECTION in our lives. (Judges 20:26-28; Acts 13:1-3)

Fasting aligns our hearts with God by increasing our appetite to PRAY. (Mark 1:35)

Fasting aligns our hearts with God increasing our appetite for Him and His WORD. (Matthew 4:1-4; John 4:31-35)





What are some different ways to fast?

Pages 10 and 11 contain some suggestions from Dr. Elmer Towns's book *The Daniel Fast for Spiritual Breakthrough*. (Used by permission)

Fasting Suggestions

Eliminate one meal a day and pray during that mealtime.

Eliminate two meals a day, and pray during their times.

Eliminate all desserts.

Eliminate all rich, superfluous foods eaten only for pleasure.

Eat only necessities, and only during mealtime (no snacks).

Eliminate all drinks except water (no coffee, tea, soda or purchased drinks).

Contemporary Interpretations

No text messaging or Facebook or Twitter communications that take your thoughts away from God.

No secular music; only praise and worship music.

No newspaper or pleasure reading; give that time to prayer.

No television; give that time to prayer.

No recreational sports; give that time to prayer.

No sex. "Both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, so they can give themselves completely to prayer." (1 Cor. 7:5, NLT)





Some Physical Aspects of Fasting

If you have specific health issues related to diet, check with a doctor before beginning a fast.

No matter what way you choose to fast make sure and drink fluids including water and fruit juices.

You may need to restrict some of your physical activity during a fast, especially rigorous exercise.

Sudden movements, especially standing up quickly, may cause dizziness or light-headedness.

Expect some physical, mental, and perhaps even some emotional discomfort during a fast. Headaches, sleeplessness, and irritability often accompany a fast, but don't allow the fast to become an excuse for improper actions or attitudes.



My Time to Pray

*Lord, I will deny myself enjoyment during my Fast
so that I can seek Your will in my life.
I count it a privilege to give up my “pleasant food”
for Your glory and as a commitment of my prayer.*

*Lord, I have made a spiritual vow to You that I will
faithfully fast and pray for 10 days or 21 days.*

*Lord, give me strong outer discipline to keep my outer vow
to You, and give me strong inner commitment
to pray faithfully for the answer I seek.*

Amen.

My Commitment to Fast and Pray

As a way of bringing focus to your time of fasting and praying, answer the following questions:

My Goal: (I am asking God to)

My Fast: (What I will withhold)

My Prayer: (When I will pray)

My Vow: God being my strength, and grace being my basis, I commit myself to this period of fasting so that God will answer my prayer and give the thing for which I trust Him. Not my will, Oh God, but Yours be done.

Lord, I dedicate small things to express the greatness of Your supremacy in all of life.

Lord, I will be faithful in little expressions of my faith for great answers to prayer.

Lord, I vow to fulfill these small expressions of my love to You.
Amen.

Signed _____

Date: _____

In God We Trust

Day 1

¹Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! ²For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Ps 37:1–2

Key Thought: God delivers those who are content with the things He provides.

Psalm 37 portrays a life of righteousness in juxtaposition to the wicked. It begins with the exhortation not to fret or become envious because of the seeming prosperity of the wicked. Wicked is used here as being synonymous to anyone who has yet to place saving faith in Christ. The comparison of these two, very different, lifestyles, continues throughout the forty verses of this psalm.

The ideas of “fretting” and “being envious” are synonymous with discontentment. **Why are we so often discontented with the way things are?** There are several reasons. One, we live in a very competitive world. Often we get caught up in being better than our perceived competition, even if we do so subconsciously.

Two, it has to do with the question “**Why does it seem the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence?**” Perhaps it is because the human heart is naturally bent towards discontentment. That is part of the reason Adam and Eve decided to eat of the forbidden fruit. Their discontentment led them to buy into Satan’s lie of a better life. They then failed to “trust in God.”

In today’s world advertisers prey upon our tendency towards discontentment. We are barraged on all sides by merchandizing that seeks to produce dissatisfaction. This discontentment will only go away if we buy their product. At least that is how the thinking goes. That was Satan’s strategy also.

Discontentment is a cousin of covetousness. To covet is to crave after something you do not have. To covet is to view the grass on the other side as being greener. This leads to the third reason for fretting and envy.

Three, all of this is a symptom of a **failure to trust God and be content with how He has blessed us**. This is the thrust of the entire psalm. “Trust me to care for you,” God says repeatedly. Are you trusting God? Or do the words

fret, envy and *discontentment* better describe you? Take some time today to meditate on the implications of being content. **You can trust God to take care of you.** Below are a few Scripture verses that reveal how God provides for His people.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Tim. 6:6–8 (ESV)

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Philippians 4:11 (ESV)

Questions to Ponder

1. Is there a particular thing or person that you envy?
2. What causes you the most frustration when you consider the circumstances of your life?
3. Why does God command us not to fret about the seeming success of the wicked?
4. Do you really believe God will supply all of your needs?

Possible Prayer Points

1. Thank God for what He has given you. Try to be specific
2. Ask God to reveal to you any hidden envy in your heart
3. Trust everything you know about yourself to everything you know about God.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 2

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Ps 37:3 (ESV)

Key Thought: God delivers those who trust Him for everything!

Trust is an all-important part of our lives, especially as we seek to be fully devoted followers of Christ. God is not desirous of partial trust for that is not trust at all.

Years ago a seminary friend shared with me about an event that happened with his very young daughter who was just shy of four. He had been working on his roof and came down to get a tool. Upon returning from the garage with the tool he heard his daughter calling out: “Daddy look at me, Daddy look at me!” In horror he looked up to see his daughter running back and forth on the edge of the roof. She was laughing and calling out for him to come and play. To her it was game of catch me if you can. He, of course, knew what happened next could be tragic. He realized to go up to get her would only cause her to run away. Remember it was a game to her.

Thinking fast, my friend said he moved closer to the house. Holding up his arms he called out “Susie, Susie, jump into daddy’s arms.” **With complete confidence in her father’s instructions** and a gleeful laugh, she did a forward dive off the roof and landed safely in her father’s arms.

God, our Father, invites us to trust Him with everything. Not just parts and pieces of our lives, but everything. Not just when the wheels fall off but at all times and in all ways. He wants us to be totally committed to depending on Him for everything.

The Hebrew word for trust is *betah*. It expresses a sense of well-being and security because there is someone in whom we place **total confidence**. God is one in whom we can have total confidence. This impacts significantly how we then live out our lives.

There are three things in the verse that are impacted by our trust in God. First, we can do good. This means we do the right thing every time regardless of the consequences. We don’t fret when the wicked seem to prosper while doing the wrong thing.

Secondly, we can dwell in the land. That simply means to embrace life in the moment.

Thirdly, we befriend righteousness. When we befriend righteousness we become the aroma of Christ to those around us and, yes, to those who give no allegiance to God.

We can live a life of complete faithfulness knowing God delivers those who hope in Him.

Questions to Ponder:

1. When have you trusted in the government or an employer or someone other than God to help you?
2. Why do you think trust is followed by the statement “do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness?”
3. Is there a particular something in your life that you are failing to trust God to do as He sees best?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Thank God for His faithfulness.
2. Ask God to open your eyes to any area in which you are failing ultimately to trust Him.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 3

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Ps 37:4 (ESV)

Key Thought: *God delivers those who find their delight in Him.*

There are ten imperatives in the first eight verses of this psalm. Each has to do with the security one has as a follower of Christ. In other words, God delivers those who hope in Him. This is the second command. It has to do with delighting in who God is. Remember that delight is a verb in this verse.

What does it mean to delight in something or someone? What is something you express great delight in? Perhaps it is your occupation. Maybe it is a friend or spouse. Those with grandchildren certainly understand the delight a grandchild brings. You would do almost anything just to spend time with them. When we are in their presence we are caught up in the moment. We tend to forget about ourselves and focus all attention on the other person. There comes a joy that is almost unspeakable.

Perhaps this is small picture of what it means to “delight yourself in the Lord.” It means you take pleasure and enjoyment in having a relationship with God. You seek to find your joy in God Himself. There are times you get caught up in His presence. These are sweet moments of fellowship and awe. In these times, we tend to forget about ourselves and simply delight in worshiping God.

To delight in God is to trust His lovingkindness even when it may feel a long way away. To delight in God is to trust His faithfulness, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5) To delight in God is to desire to please Him. To delight in God is to seek Him first in all situations.

Delight and joy are similar in meaning. There is a reality of wellbeing that comes from trusting God to be our greatest joy. Nehemiah tells the people of Israel, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Neh. 8:10)

To delight in God is also to behave in a manner that brings joy to Him. It is an act of obedience. To delight in God is to love His Word. To delight in God is to follow His Son. To delight in God is to worship.

Notice carefully God's response to our delight: ". . . and He will give you the desires of your heart." It is safe to say when God is our delight we desire the things which bring glory to Him.

Questions to Ponder:

1. How would you define the term "delight"? Remember the word as used here is a verb not a noun or adjective.
2. What desire in your heart are you seeking from God during this time of fasting and prayer?
3. What desire might you have that would not bring glory to God?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to create in you a delight for who He is.
2. Thank God for three of His attributes in which you take delight.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 4

⁵ Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. ⁶ He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Ps 37:5–6 (ESV)

Key Thought: *God delivers the righteous when they commit everything to Him.*

Commitment is an all-important aspect if you play professional sports. It is also true no matter what we may attempt to do. Without commitment, the chance of failure looms large. Jesus told the disciples “Whoever wants to be my disciple, **must deny themselves** and take up their cross and follow me.” (Lk 9:23 NIV) This verse has commitment all over it.

The idea of “commit” in verse 5 has the sense of “rolling something onto another object or person. In other words, we are to roll upon God every area of our life. The same idea is found in Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Throughout Psalm 37, God is reminding his people that He is there for them even when the circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. If we are not to fret (v.1) because of the apparent prosperity of the wicked, then we are **not to take matters into our own hands**. That is the lesson of verses five and six. We must make God our guide, and roll everything to Him for his guidance and disposal.

Verse six then reminds us that God will vindicate our righteousness. He will always act on behalf of the righteous. Sometimes it is hard, in a society that is less and less Christian, to live out our faith. There are those who will laugh at us or think we are backward. Yet our commitment to God puts us under His protection. In other words, we do not have to defend ourselves from the accusations of others. We do not have to get even. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

The title of this prayer and fasting devotional is ***In God We Trust***. This is exactly what verses five and six are saying; “trust in Him, and He will act.” Therefore you do not have to take matters into your own hands. This does not mean you are relieved of responsibilities, rather it means **God will fight**

for you. We are to do what Peter exhorts “⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that **at the proper time He may exalt you,** ⁷ **casting all your anxieties on Him,** because He cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:6–8 (ESV)

Questions to Ponder:

1. What causes you the most anxiety?
2. Where are you taking matters into your own hands? In other words you are not waiting for God to act on your behalf.

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to reveal to you where you need to trust Him to bring about your righteousness.
2. Pray for anyone who is hostile to you as a follower of Christ.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 5

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!
Ps 37:7 (ESV)

Key Thought: *God delivers those who wait patiently for Him to deliver.*

For many of us there are **two things which are hard to do**. The first is to “**be still**” and the other is to “**wait patiently**” while being still. Both take an extreme amount of discipline. When was the last time you were running a bit late, and it seemed every stop light was red? Some will wait and “fret” for it to change. Others will take a different route with fewer stoplights even though it might take longer to get there. Sitting still is just not in our DNA. If only we had waited patiently for the light to change.

This is so true in our spiritual lives as well. Things are not happening according to our timetable, so we take matters into our own hands. Experience teaches us that this is not the best route to our desired destination. Often it only leads to more delays and greater frustration. If only we could be comfortable sitting still with the patience the Holy Spirit desires to give when we ask.

Once again the Psalmist is reminding us to live out ***In God We Trust!*** This is so wrapped up in the **idea of being still**. Sometimes we rush to the conclusion that to be still means only “trust in God.” Yes, the reason we can be still is because we do trust in God. However, at its core the verb means “**cease striving, stop, come to rest.**” This means there is a time when we simply stop. It means we stop trying different options while we wait for God to work. When we stop it is easier to listen. Notice the command is “**be still before the Lord.**” Meaning **God has not left the room.**

To be still is to stop wrestling with the situation that brings so much frustration. Three times in this psalm we are told not to fret. God uses the Psalmist to drive the point home from several different angles. Rather than fret, we are to trust, delight, commit, and now we are to be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act. To wait patiently is to trust God.

Notice the source of frustration in this verse. It is over the one who prospers and gives no credence to God. We always get in trouble when we begin to compare our lives with the lives of others. It only leads to unhealthy competition. As you meditate on this verse answer the following questions.

Questions to Ponder:

1. What is the connection between “be still” and “wait patiently”?
2. When have you taken matters in your own hands rather than wait for God to work? How did it turn out?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to show you where you are taking matters into your own hands rather than trusting him to work.
2. Thank God for always working on your behalf.
3. Thank God for settling the score in His own way and own time.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 6

⁸ Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. ⁹ For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. Ps 37:8–9 (ESV)

Key Thought: God delivers those who refrain from anger and leave justice in His hands.

This is now day six of your commitment to 21 days of fasting and prayer. How is it going? What is God doing in your heart through this time? Sometimes at this point, we may want to give up. Perhaps God has not done yet what you were seeking. Please be patient. Wait for God to work in His own time. It is very possible there is a big surprise in store for you. Stay strong in the Lord. Blessings as you continue to fast and pray.

This verse reaches back to something that was hinted at in verse 6. We are to trust God because He is going to act on our behalf. He will bring forth our righteousness; in other words, He will vindicate us.

Because it is hard to resist the urge to get even, God reminds us again in this verse not to fret over the disparity or injustice we see. Even when it is directed toward us personally. Oh, yes we are to take a stand against injustice. However **we are to refrain from anger**. Notice here that it acknowledges the existence of anger. Yet we are not to let anger rule over us, we are to refrain from it. We are not to let the sun go down on our anger. (Eph. 4:26) That means **it is to be short lived**. Two ways which we can refrain from anger are by letting the light of Christ shine through us and letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. (Mt 5:16 and Col 3:15)

Much too often we take matters in our own hands. When we do, it only leads to more stress and strife because anger and wrath do not lead to resolution. God tells us in verse eight that **it will only lead to evil**. Not only does it lead to evil, studies in the medical profession reveal that anger leads to bitterness and bitterness is a killer. It is a killer both physically and spiritually.

Rather than fretting and angrily taking matters into our hands, we are to trust God. Verse nine reminds us again of the results of putting our hope in God to deliver. “For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.” The land for King David was, of course, the land of

Israel. He tells the nation that when they trust God for everything the land will remain theirs.

This translates for us today as, “**God establishes the ways of the fully devoted follower of Christ.**” In other words, He will deliver those who live by the principle ***In God We Trust***. Paul puts it this way in the first letter to Timothy, “. . . for while bodily training is of some value, **godliness is of value in every way**, as it holds promise **for the present life** and also for the **life to come.**” 1 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)

Questions to Ponder:

1. What angers you greatly?
2. Are you able to give it to God?
3. Are you able to refrain from anger?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Confess any anger you harbor and seek forgiveness
2. Ask God if you need to confess your anger to anyone else.
3. Pray for the strength to refrain from anger and wrath.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 7

The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Ps 37:12-15

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .

When We are Persecuted

For 15 years, North Korea has ranked #1 on the Open Doors World Watch List as the worst place to be a Christian. In this country, the very act of owning a Bible is punishable by death. An estimated 25% of the Christian population lives in prison camps. The others must keep their faith a secret. Many Christian parents choose to keep their faith a secret from their children, for fear that they might accidentally expose their faith to their neighbors, teachers or government officials. It is heartbreaking for parents to not have the ability to share their faith with their children. Many rely on the hope that God will allow them to one day when they are grown. In addition to North Korea, there are 49 other countries around the world where Christians experience sparse to extreme persecution (www.opendoorusa.org).

According to the Psalmist we should not be surprised at the persecution that is happening throughout the world . . . and is getting closer and closer to home every day. The Psalmist says that the wicked *plot* (vs 12), *gnash their teeth* (vs 12), *draw the sword* (vs 14), and *bend their bows* (vs 14) in attack against the righteous. An attack on the righteous is not just physical violence, it also includes ridicule, intimidation, threats, and discrimination.

Jesus said in John 15:18-25,

If the world hates you, know that ***it has hated me before it hated you***. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore ***the world hates you***. Remember the word that I said to you: "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, ***they will also persecute you***. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they

have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: "They hated me without a cause."

The righteous who love Jesus Christ can expect the same treatment as Jesus experienced while He was in this world. The righteous are always going to be the target of hatred and persecution by the wicked because they hate Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should not be surprised when we are mistreated because of belief in Christ. Being persecuted by the wicked does not mean that God is not involved or not paying attention to our situation; in fact, just the opposite is true, it's evidence of our relationship with Christ!

Questions to Ponder:

1. Spend 30 minutes browsing www.opendoorusa.org or www.persecution.com to learn more about the persecution that is happening to Christians around the world.
2. READ: Matthew 5:10-12 and Romans 12:14 What is to be the response of the righteous when we are persecuted?
3. Has there ever been a time in your life when God upheld you through a time of persecution?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Take some time to pray for the righteous who are experiencing extreme persecution in other parts of the world.
2. READ: 2 Timothy 3:12 Ask God to prepare you for whatever persecution may come into your life as a result of your belief in Jesus Christ.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 8

The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Ps 37:12-15

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .

By Being Their Avenger

Throughout Jesus' life, after His arrest, all the way up until the moment He died, He was **hated**. He endured **constant persecution** including criticism, rejection, insults, false accusations, threats on His life, betrayal, wrongful arrest, being spit on, punched, slapped, mocked, made fun of, and finally crucifixion as a criminal. (Mark 15:16-20, 29-32; Luke 22:63-65, 10-11, 35-43) Amazingly, Jesus never did anything wrong to deserve any of this persecution! Even more amazingly, although Jesus endured a lifetime of unjust suffering, He never once retaliated in any way! Why? 1 Peter 2:21-23 says that, "Christ . . . suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example, so that [we] might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but **continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.**" Jesus did not consider it His responsibility to make things right for Himself, instead He fully trusted God to do it for Him!

If we, like Christ, are not to stand up for ourselves when we are persecuted, what are we supposed to do? According to the Psalmist it is the Lord who **gets the last "laugh at the wicked"**, He will cause the sword that the wicked has aimed at the righteous to "enter their own heart," and He will cause "their bows [to] be broken." God will eventually turn the plotting, the gnashing of teeth, the drawing of the sword, and the bending of the bow of the wicked toward the righteous back against them. The Lord will fight on behalf of the righteous with His wrath.

Paul said in Romans 12:19, "never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, '**Vengeance is mine, I will repay,**' says the Lord." It is not our responsibility to decide or give others what they deserve when they have mistreated us. God has promised that He will avenge and He will repay on our behalf. Isaiah 30:18 says, "**the Lord is a God of justice;** blessed are those who wait for Him." Instead of avenging ourselves, it is our

responsibility to wait on God who is just. One day, God will judge everyone fairly and give them the consequences they deserve for what they have done, which frees us from the need to do it for ourselves!

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ: Romans 1:18-32, 2:5-11; Colossians 3:5-6 What is God's wrath and who is it for?
2. READ: Romans 12:14-21 How are we to respond to those who persecute us (vs 14)? How are we to respond to those who commit evil against us (vs 17, 21)? How are we to respond to a hungry or thirst enemy (vs 20)?
3. READ: Matthew 13:37-42, 47-50; Revelation 20:11-15. What is the just punishment that is coming for the wicked?
4. Is there anyone in your life on whom you need to stop trying to avenge yourself and wait for God to execute His justice?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. READ: 2 Peter 3:8-10. Pray for the wicked that they would repent and avoid the wrath of God.
2. Pray and thank God that He is a God of perfect justice. Ask Him to help you wait for Him to execute His justice at the right time.

How will I put this into practice

In God We Trust

Day 9

Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. Ps 37:16-17

**Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .
with the Strength to be Content with Little**

“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” . . . this phrase is used to describe our dissatisfaction with what we have. It’s not just the grass that’s greener; it’s the house that’s bigger; it’s the car that’s faster; it’s the clothes that are more stylish; it’s the iPhone that’s a newer generation; it’s the friends that are more popular; it’s the jump shot that’s more accurate; it’s the skin that’s clearer; it’s the muscles that are stronger; it’s the grade point average that’s higher; it’s the parents that are cooler and not so strict, etc. Get the picture? It really doesn’t matter what it is: **dissatisfaction is simply an attitude that what we possess is little compared to the abundance that others possess.**

God warned against being dissatisfied with little in Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21 when He said, “you shall not covet.” Covetousness is simply a desire or longing for something. When we look over someone else’s “fence” we are not to desire or long for the abundance that they possess. Covetousness is a sin that destroys our satisfaction that is to be found in God and therefore destroys our true happiness and joy.

According to Psalm 37 **little is better!** We must be careful not to compare what we have with others who are in abundance. The abundance of the wicked is not an indication of God’s blessing or favor. It is much more favorable to be right with God and have little than to be wicked and have an abundance. During this life when there seems to be an unjust balance of material possession a characteristic that will help us avoid dissatisfaction with little is contentment.

One secret of being content with little is knowing the difference between the little that we really need and the abundance of things we selfishly want. First Timothy 6:6-8 says, “godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But **if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.**”

A simple way we resist the temptation of dissatisfaction is always to be grateful that our basic needs in life are met and expect nothing more.

Another secret of being content with little is trusting God to give you the strength to be content. Philippians 4:11-13 says “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” It is God who gives us strength to do all that is necessary to be content with little. In moments when we are dissatisfied with little, as we compare ourselves with the abundance of the wicked, God will supply us with all the strength we need to be content.

John Piper wrote, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” Ultimately, the only way we will be content with little is believing with all confidence that God is all we need to be truly satisfied!

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ: Hebrews 13:5-6 What reason is given to “keep your life free from the love of money” and “be content with what you have”?
2. Is there anything specific that the wicked possess in abundance that causes you to be dissatisfied with little?
3. Has there ever been a time that God has upheld you through a time when you felt like you had little?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to help you learn the secret of being content with the little that you have.
2. Ask God to give you strength to do all that is necessary to be content with little.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 10

The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. Ps 37:18-20

Key Thought: *God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .*

by helping them see their days in light of eternity

Our days are profoundly important because the sum of our life is made up of what we have done with each one of our “days.” Our “days” are extremely valuable, if each of us lived the full life expectancy of 79 years then we would have about 28,835 “days” to look forward to and enjoy.

I (P David) calculated that as of today, since June 20, 1974 when I was born, my life odometer reads 15,559 “days” which have been used up and are GONE! A 20-year-old has used 7,300 days, a 30-year-old 10,950 days, a 40-year-old 14,600 days, a 50-year-old 18,250 days, a 60-year-old 21,900 days, and a 70-year-old 25,500 days. These are sobering numbers, especially if you’ve crossed the halfway mark!

Whether we are aware that our days are going by quickly or not, Psalm 103:15-16 says that our 28,835 “days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” Psalm 144:4 says, “man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.” The days of our lives are short; like a breath or a shadow . . . here one moment and gone the next.

The days of our lives may be short, but we were not originally created with a short life span. In fact, our days were never intended to be cut short or limited at all. It is sin that brought temporality and death to our existence (Gen. 2:16, 3:22-24). ***We were created with an infinite number of days to dwell with God forever.***

According to Psalm 37, ***the Lord knows the “days” of the blameless.*** For the blameless (righteous), since we have been forgiven of our sin through faith in Christ, the heritage of our days will continue on forever in heaven with God. Therefore, we must live each and every one of our days in light of the eternity we were created for. We know that our days are short and we should be grateful to God that He allows us to see all of them in light of eternity.

In contrast, ***those who are wicked only have the short number of days in this life.*** They will “perish” as a result of their sin and will suffer an eternity without God. This is not an eternity we should hope or wish upon the wicked, but instead intentionally engage them with the gospel so that they too might be counted among the blameless. 1 Peter 3:8-9 says, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

God does not want the wicked to perish, and neither should we. We have been rescued from our wickedness in order to help others see their days in light of eternity as well!

Questions to Ponder:

1. Take a few moments to calculate the exact number of days you have been alive. Now, based on a life expectancy of 79 years, calculate how many days you have left. How can you use the days you have left to increase a heritage that will remain forever?
2. Are there any members of your OIKOS that you would like to see come to repentance and not perish as a result of their wickedness?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Pray and ask God to help you use all the days of your life to increase a heritage that will remain forever.
2. Pray and ask God to give you an opportunity share the good news of Jesus Christ with a member of your OIKOS who is destined to perish as a result of their wickedness.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 11

The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; for those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. Ps 37:21-22

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .

By Giving Them a Spirit of Generosity

What does it mean to be blessed by the Lord? Is there a way to look at a person's life from the outside and know for a fact that they are blessed? When we look at our culture we quickly assume that those who are wealthy, healthy, and prosperous are experiencing blessing. At times, it seems unfair that those who gain their prosperity by taking advantage of others experience blessing (37:7). These observations raise the question in our hearts, why do the wicked prosper while the righteous seem to struggle?

According to Psalm 37 the evidence of the blessing upon the righteous is their willingness to be "generous" and "give" to others! The righteous experience blessing through knowing that there is a rich future "inheritance" waiting for them from the Lord. It is such an abundant blessing that motivates the righteous to be generous and give rather than pursue prosperity or accumulate worldly things.

Why are the righteous able to be generous and give? There are several reasons given throughout Psalm 37. The righteous who are blessed by the Lord understand that IN GOD they already possess everything they need to be satisfied (37:3, 4, 16). The righteous who are blessed by the Lord understand that the prosperity the wicked achieve will not last (37:1, 7, 9-10, 35-36). The righteous who are blessed by the Lord understand that true blessing is spiritual and not material (37:11, 34, 40). The righteous who are blessed by the Lord understand that their inheritance is not temporal but rather eternal (Ps 37:29). The righteous who are blessed by the Lord understand it is a joy to be a blessing and do good to others (37:3, 27, 30). According to Psalm 37, ***the righteous are generous and able to give because they've ALREADY been abundantly blessed!***

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, Paul uses the churches of Macedonia as an example of what those who have been blessed by the Lord do when he wrote, "we want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance

of joy and their extreme poverty have ***overflowed in a wealth of generosity.***” What was the evidence that the Macedonians were blessed by the Lord? It was not because things were going well for them, they were enduring a severe test of affliction. It was not because they were wealthy; they were experiencing extreme poverty. The tangible evidence that the Macedonians had been blessed by the Lord was the generosity and giving spirit that overflowed from their lives as a result of the abundant joy that was in their hearts!

When the wicked seem to prosper, don’t mistake it for God’s blessing. When the wicked borrow and don’t pay back and continue to accumulate more and more, don’t mistake it for God’s favor. The truest evidence of the Lord’s blessing upon our lives, whether rich or poor, whether successful or unsuccessful, is our willingness to be generous and to give!

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ: Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35. What characteristic of the early church gives evidence that they had experienced the Lord’s blessing?
2. READ: 1 Timothy 6:17. What are the rich in this present world charged to do? Why?
3. What fruit of generosity and giving exists in your life that is evidence you are among those who are blessed by the Lord?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Use Ephesians 1:3-14 as a prayer of thanks to God for all the ways He has blessed you.
2. Pray and ask God to bless you to the point where your life overflows with a generous and giving spirit

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 12

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.

Ps 37:23-24

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous . . .

With a Hand to Uphold the Steps of their Lives

In 2013, Marianne and I went on a vacation to Fort Payne, Alabama. We spent our days together enjoying the beauty of God's creation at a few state parks in the area. We hiked on paths along a river canyon with waterfalls and whitewater. The paths were a bit dangerous and treacherous at times so I held Marianne's hand so that when she tripped or slipped I would be able to uphold and support her. A hand while navigating a rough path helps provide stability, safety, and assurance.

Stumbling and falling in life is inevitable. The path of life is filled with too many bumps that can cause us to trip or slip and fall to be able to avoid them all. Some of our falls come as a result of our own selfishness, pride, and sin while others come as a result of the actions of the wicked. King David walked a dangerous and treacherous path throughout life but God was continually there to give him stability and protection. When King David was being pursued by his enemies and Saul was trying to kill him he wrote in Psalm 18:33 and 36 that God had given him, "feet like the feet of a deer and set (him) secure on the heights" and "**a wide place for (his) steps under (him), and (his) feet did not slip.**" Although the steps of David's life were full of danger and treachery, the Lord gave David firm footing for his life.

According to Psalm 37, ***the Lord blesses the righteous by providing stability, safety, and assurance for the "steps" of our lives.*** It is the Lord's strong hand that keeps us on our feet as we trip along the dangerous and treacherous path of life. With His strong hand He "upholds" us. He causes us to maintain our balance and stay on our feet when life trips us up. With His strong hand He "establishes" us. He causes the steps of our lives to be taken on a path that is solid, steady, and secure.

Proverbs 16:9 says, "the heart of man plans his way, but ***the Lord establishes His steps.***" Most of us want to plan our own way in our hearts. Many make the mistake of walking to path of life independent of God. We think we know the way that is best for ourselves. The plans we make to establish our own

steps are woefully inadequate because they are always tainted by selfishness, pride, and sin.

Instead of trying to plan our own way, we need the Lord to establish our steps. ***The Lord blesses the righteous with unshakable stability when we “delight in His way.”*** The Lord alone has the infinite wisdom and knowledge to help us navigate the path of life. He graciously extends His strong hand of blessing in our lives and we must choose to receive it with delight. When we do, no matter how many times we trip or slip and fall, He is there, upholding us, establishing us, and giving us all the stability, safety, and assurance we need in life!

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ Psalm 119:105. What is it that enlightens each of our steps along the dangerous and treacherous path of life?
2. Prov. 4:18 and 24:16. What is it that makes the path of the righteous so much easier to navigate?
3. Have you taken hold of the Lord’s strong hand to provide stability, assurance, and safety on the dangerous and treacherous path of your life?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Pray and thank God for the times He has upheld you with His strong hand.
2. Take a few moments and express to God your delight in the way that He wants to lead you on the path of life.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 13

I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. Ps 37:25-26

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked . . .

By Providing for the Children of the Next Generation!

Whining, complaining, arguing, tattle-tailing, loud, obnoxious, selfish . . . these are some of the first things that come to mind when we think of children. Not someone else's children, OUR children. Children can be a major source of frustration, disappointment, and exhaustion. These thoughts remind us that parenting and grand-parenting are hard, but we must not allow these thoughts to become the primary way we think of the children that God has placed in our lives.

Why? Because according to Psalm 37 "children are a **blessing.**" From the very beginning, God had a purpose and plan for family. In Genesis 1:28, God "blessed" Adam and Eve, and the very first command He gave them (which should tell us something about its importance) was to, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." ***God established a blessing that was to propagate through parents having children who would have children who would have children, generation after generation after generation.***

King David noticed this blessing throughout a long life even though his own children were a great source of difficulty and hardship. From the time that David was "young" until he was "old" he never saw the children of the righteous "begging for bread." God was continually providing for the needs of the next generation. In spite of David's faults and failures as a father, He saw God bringing goodness into his children's lives. At the end of David's life he spoke a word to his son, Solomon, that the Lord had spoken to him, "if your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel." (1 Kings 2:4) David was charging Solomon to become a blessing as the blessing had been passed to him. This is a blessing that the righteous are to recognize and make effort to pass on to the next generation, trusting that God will use it to impact future generations they will never see. The blessing that God established in the beginning is the blessing that is to be passed through every family tree on earth. It's a blessing that God is using to pass through future generations of all the righteous. Psalm 127:3-5 says,

“Behold, ***children are a heritage from the Lord***, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. ***Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!*** He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

Children are not an annoyance to be tolerated, but rather a valuable heritage from the Lord that He is using to propagate His blessing to all people. Are you allowing God’s blessing to be passed on from you into the lives of your children/grandchildren?

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ: Exodus 20:6. What is the promise for children who honor their father and their mother?
2. READ: Deuteronomy 6:4-7. What practical ways are parents to propagate God’s blessing on to their children?
3. Are your children/grandchildren a source of blessing for you? How are you propagating the blessing that God has given to you on to your children/grandchildren?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Pray and ask God to help you understand how much of a blessing your children/grandchildren are.
2. Pray and ask God to help you propagate blessing along into the life of your children and/or grandchildren.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 14

Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. Ps 37: 27-28

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous . . .

Who Turn From Evil and Do Good

“But they did/said _____ to me first!” These are words or an unspoken attitude that we feel towards others who have done some type of evil against us. It is a statement/attitude that we make to justify our evil treatment of others. As long as someone else did something to us first we think it’s right to do something evil in return to them, but that is not to be the response of the righteous.

We have been reminded in several ways throughout Psalm 37 that the wicked are going to act in evil ways toward the righteous. The righteous are not to fret because of evildoers (37:1). The righteous are not to fret over the man who carries out evil devices (37:7). The righteous are to trust God to avenge them when the wicked “plot,” “gnash their teeth,” “draw the sword,” and “bend their bows” against them (7:12-15). These are both important, passive responses to evil, but God gives the righteous an active response to evil as well!

According to Psalm 37, the Lord blesses the righteous who “turn from evil” and “do good.” We are to refrain from the anger and fretting which tends only to evil (37:8). No matter what evil treatment we experience, evil is never treatment we should exhibit toward others. If we do evil to those who have done evil to us we are no better than them. It doesn’t matter who initiated the evil; whoever participates in evil is guilty. ***The righteous are to turn and have nothing to do with evil, but instead, treat evildoers with goodness.*** Goodness is treatment that is morally right with no intent to harm. Even more, doing good is an act of blessing that is for the benefit of the recipient.

1 Peter 3:9-14 and 17 says,

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For ‘Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; **let him turn away from evil and do good**; let him seek

peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed . . . It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

Turning from evil and doing good is God’s prescribed response for the righteous because it’s the only response that promotes peace. Any other response only perpetuates evil.

The righteous who turn from evil and do good obtain a blessing from God. The Lord is watching and listening. He **sees** the good deeds of the righteous. He **hears** the prayers for help the righteous. If we are zealous to do good, especially toward those who have done evil against us, God is fully aware and will not allow us to be harmed.

Trust in the fact that God loves justice! The Lord cares deeply about making things right for both the wicked and the righteous. By trusting in God’s justice we are free to respond to the evil treatment we experience from the wicked with goodness!

Questions to Ponder:

1. READ Matthew 5:38-42. What does “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” mean? What alternatives does Jesus offer in response to the one who is evil?
2. READ Amos 5:14-15. What is the benefit of seeking good, and not evil?
3. What evil treatment are you experiencing that you need to respond with goodness?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Pray and ask God to grant peace in any relationships in your life where you have experienced evil treatment.
2. Pray and ask God to help you respond to evil treatment in your life with goodness.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 15

“They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.”

Psalms 37:28b-29 (ESV)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous – They will receive an eternal inheritance

Yesterday we heard David encouraging us as Followers of Christ always to be righteous and do that which is good . . . even in response to those who mistreat us! Today we will see that one of the reasons we should be motivated to do this is the spiritual inheritance we have in Christ.

Many of the *wicked* referred to in Psalm 37 were the nations that surrounded David and the nation of Israel. Their determined intent was to destroy them, removing them from the area entirely. Truly, not much has changed in that part of the world!

God’s promises and inheritance to Israel are tied to them possessing the land of Palestine. These will be ultimately fulfilled when Jesus returns as the reigning Messiah. The wicked will be *cut off*, but God’s righteous followers will live in the land for eternity.

For the New Testament Christian, our inheritance is a spiritual one, and is tied to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter describes it in 1 Peter 1:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV)

Our inheritance comes out of God’s mercy and love for us. When we place saving faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, we are born again – spiritually made alive – and now enjoy a right and intimate relationship with God as our Father.

Our inheritance is as living as Jesus Himself. Our assurance that we will receive what God has promised is that Jesus rose from the grave and now

lives. If Jesus rose from the dead to eternal life so will we who are His followers!

Our inheritance is held by the power of Jesus in heaven. This treasure is pure, undefiled and perfect. Nothing can ever diminish or tarnish it!

We ourselves are being guarded by God and His power. Nothing and no one can remove us from His hand, care, and love.

So when life becomes unbearably difficult, or unfair, or when your godliness is taken advantage of do not go down the path of fretting! **Read those verses in 1 Peter 1:3-5 and be reminded that in Christ, you and your inheritance are held in the hand of God – secured by His power.**

Questions to Ponder:

1. How can a fresh focus on your spiritual inheritance help you keep the long view of eternity?
2. What are some of the specific promises that make up your spiritual inheritance?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Peter begins verse 3 with words of worship. Be sure that worship is on the front-end of your time with God! Worship God by reflecting on His names, or His works, or His attributes.
2. Ask God for the grace to see life through the lens of eternity, your spiritual inheritance and destiny. Then ask God to enable you to see your life and circumstances through His eyes.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 16

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.

Psalms 37:30-31 (ESV)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous – His Word provides wisdom and sure steps.

Throughout this Psalm David has been providing a contrast between those who love God and are righteous and those who reject God and His people and are wicked. As he writes these two verses he gives us three characteristics of a righteous person. In fact, these character qualities identify one as being righteous.

We find the first character quality in verse 31: “The law of his God is in his heart.’ The righteous person does more than know God’s Word in their head. They allow God’s Word to soak into their heart, where they are impacted on a deeper level. Their thoughts, emotions, desires, motivations and decisions have been changed by what they have read. They experience the transformation described by Paul in Roman’s 12:1-2:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

We experience this deep transformation as we read the Bible, study the Bible, pray over what we have read, seek God’s grace to apply the Bible, step out in obedience to the Bible. As we experience the Bible impacting us on a heart level the next two characteristics begin to happen.

“The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom.” The second characteristic is our ability to see life and people through the lens of Scripture, producing wisdom. Wisdom is the truth of God applied to our life situations. Whether facing decisions or the attacks of the wicked, as being described in Psalm 37, we have the wisdom to respond with Christ-like words, attitudes and actions. Our words also reflect integrity – **his tongue speaks justice.**

Then we discover the third character quality: his steps do not slip. As we respond to people and situations, we remain on God's path of righteousness. Regardless of the situation, we apply God's truth with wisdom, resulting in actions that honor God and keep us in the center of His will for us.

When we allow ourselves to fret about people and circumstances, we can soon find ourselves distancing ourselves from God through poor attitudes and reactions. However when we choose to trust God, we are drawn to His Word, which changes our hearts – provides needed wisdom – and guides our steps.

Questions to Ponder:

1. How has fretting about someone or something led you to have a poor attitude and to make a poor decision?
2. When did knowing a Biblical principle prove to be wisdom & discernment in a situation or relationship?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Thinking about that third character quality (our steps not slipping), pray for God to use that passage to provide wisdom and discernment.
2. Are there heart issues that you need God to transform? Go to an appropriate passage of the Bible and pray for God to apply them to your heart.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 17

The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. Psalms 37:32-33 (ESV)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – Even when the wicked seek to harm us.

David knew what it was like to be pursued by people who wanted to do him harm! Goliath was determined to run him through with his spear and soon the Philistines put a price on his head. He fought many battles where he was the prized target of every enemy soldier on the field yet still died an old man in his own bed.

However, not all of the enemies of David wore the uniform of a foreign nation. King Saul's jealousy drove him to seek David's life. His own son, Absalom, sought his life and crown. These betrayals undoubtedly caused far more distress and discouragement than any number of Goliaths. As we read many of David's other Psalms his sense of being under the threat of his many enemies also caused him to question God and His promised protection.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Ps. 13:1

Though there were those who wanted to harm him, David never stopped putting his trust in God. He may have had his moments of questions and even doubts, but he always returned to the truth that God was and would always continue to be his stronghold.

But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me. Ps. 13:5, 6

Every one of us have experienced being unjustly slandered and/or treated. We have seen people who not only reject God in their own life but who see fit to attack those who do love and follow God. Sometimes we see this from a distance, as we read about Christians around the world paying a price for living for Christ. Other times the experience is much more personal, as we are the recipients of this treatment. To make matters even worse, it can seem those who are rejecting God and attacking His people are holding the upper hand!

Let us be taught by David, the man who is described as “a man after God’s own heart.” **First, God is the one we need to take our fears, frustrations, anger and questions to in prayer. (Phil. 4:4-7)**

Then, having opened ourselves to God, settle into His presence as the One who is our Stronghold. God holds us in His hand, where no one can snatch us away! (John 10:28-29) Or as David says, “will not abandon him to his [enemy’s] power.”

Questions to Ponder:

1. Are you feeling fearful, frustrated or angry as you see those who seek to attack God, His values and we His people? Why are their actions creating these feelings within you?
2. As you have read through Psalm 37, what verses have brought encouragement to you? How can you claim them in your own life right now?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Take some time to remind yourself of Who God is, and the promises He has made to you.
2. Then ask God to take your fears and frustrations you have in your heart and transform them into opportunities to experience Him as your stronghold.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 18

Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

Psalms 37:34 (ESV)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – Even when He deems to delay His response to our need.

One of the more remarkable scenes in the Bible is found in Acts 16:16-26. Paul and Silas are in the midst of a normal, uneventful day. As they are walking to their daily prayer meeting they suddenly find themselves thrown into a series of events that result in their illegal imprisonment, sitting in several inches of water with their feet fastened in stocks. No one would blame them if they started to fret and fume. Fret over the serious and potentially life-threatening situation they found themselves in – fuming over the injustice of it all. However, Acts 16:25-26 reveals a very different response:

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

Acts 16:25-26 (ESV)

Paul and Silas are living out Psalm 37:34! David gives us two principles to live out:

1. "Wait on the Lord" – Patiently and confidently entrusting ourselves to God's care and timing.
2. "Keep His way" – Walk in trusting obedience to God's Word

Waiting on the Lord is not being stoic and silent as we wait for God with gritted teeth! It is an 'active' waiting, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, we live as Fully Devoted Followers of Christ, reflecting Jesus in our attitudes, words and actions. As Paul and Silas worship God in that dungeon, we are told the other prisoners were listening. Undoubtedly some of them joined the Philippian jailor in placing Saving Faith in Christ as a result of their 'active' waiting on the Lord.

There are times when God chooses to step into our challenges quickly, like in Acts 16. There are other times when God delays intervening, as He did in

David's life. David had to dodge King Saul for over a decade after being told he was to be the next king of Israel. Certainly there were times when David asked God what was keeping Him! As history shows, in God's chosen time, Saul died on the battle field and David finally wore the crown. As he waited, David proved himself faithful to obeying God's Word.

The longer God waits to step into our situations the more challenging it becomes to "wait" on Him in this way, leading to a spirit of fretting. **However, if we are going to live out a testimony of trusting obedience we will rest in God's time; we will be enabled by God's grace; we will walk in God's way.** We know that in God's chosen time He will act, blessing those who have loved and followed Him, and bringing the wicked - who refused to love and follow Him - to final judgement

Questions to Ponder:

1. How are we to "keep God's way"? How do we live out the Great Commandment, Beatitudes and Fruit of the Spirit?
2. What are the people and situations that can cause you to fret instead of trust? How can "keeping God's way" help your trust in God grow as you deal with them?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God to bring to mind the promises He has made to you as His child. Then ask for the grace to grow your trust in each of them.
2. Now ask God to show you how he wants to mold and change you during the times of "waiting" on Him.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 19

I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.

Psalms 37:35-36 (ESV)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold - The gains of the wicked are short-lived.

“I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.” Psalms 37:35-36 (ESV)

In verse 34, David us to wait on God and His timing while living in obedience to His Word. In God’s time He will indeed act, and set things right.

As we read verses 35 and 36, David reaches into his own personal life and experience to offer an important observation. Often, while we wait on the Lord for His timing, the wicked seem to prosper as their power and influence grows. In fact, our following “God’s Way” can seem to put us at a disadvantage! Our integrity, humility, graciousness and kindness are taken advantage of, not honored.

This wicked person is pictured as “spreading himself like a green laurel tree” – a great tree with a large crown that casts its shadow over a large area. This person’s life and fortune spreads its influence and control over everyone in their “shadow.” Their character is described as wicked and ruthless – fierce and violent. They seem able to get whatever they want.

There is no doubt this can lead a follower of Christ to “fret”! It seems so unfair – how are we to respond when this happens? David continues with his personal observation, “But he passed away, and behold he was no more.” This phrase carries the idea that this happens quickly and unexpectedly. God will not allow evil to triumph! In His time, whether in this life or in eternity, godliness will be honored and evil will not only be judged but will perish.

So as one who is seeking to grow as a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ, resist the urge to focus on what others are doing and seemingly able to get away with. We are never to resort to the ways or attitudes of those who refuse to acknowledge God or His Ways, even when it seems we are at their mercy for a time.

Instead we are to live out the encouragement given to us by the writer of Hebrews:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:1-2 (ESV)

Questions to Ponder:

1. What examples have you seen either in history or from your personal observation, where a “wicked” person seemed to prosper for a season only to suffer a fall in time?
2. What are some times and situations in your life where things seemed unfair? When you seemed to suffer for doing what was right? What was your immediate reaction? Your response over time?
3. What are some other verses/promises that bring encouragement when you are facing a challenging or difficult time? Think about things like God’s presence, love and faithfulness.

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Take a few moments to remember times when God has stepped into your life during a difficult time. Be sure to thank Him and then ask for the grace to find encouragement and strength for the current challenges in your life.
2. Paul tells us to return goodness for mistreatment, for in doing so God will bring conviction upon them. (Romans 12:20-21) Take a moment to pray for those people around you who reject God and lash out at His people and ask God to use your goodness to convict them of their need of Christ.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 20

Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off.

Psalms 37:37-38 (ESV)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – He provides a future for the righteous.

From time to time we will hear about a young man or woman who shows great promise in a particular field. It might be athletics, or music, or drama, or academics. As they perform well above their age and experience someone will say, “Take note of that person . . . they have the potential to really excel and be someone special.” We will note their name and from time to time check in on their progress.

That is what David is saying to us in verse 37. Having noted the downfall of the wicked in verse 36, he now draws our attention to one who is blameless and upright...who loves and is devoted to God. The word *Mark* means to take notice of a person, watching them over time and noting what they do. “Watch what happens to the Fully Devoted Follower of Christ over time.”

As we “mark” and watch the future of the righteous, we see them experience peace. The Hebrew word is *Shalom* and means to be complete . . . to be whole . . . content . . . experience wellbeing and overall health. The word brings our focus on God’s care and provision in our lives. The Lord has promised His presence, grace and provision in this life and in eternity the promise we will be with Him. God then becomes our peace...our Shalom, regardless of life’s circumstances. Jesus speaks to those of us who have placed saving faith in Him in John 16:33:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. John 16:33 (ESV)

Even though Moses was raised in the court of Pharaoh’s household, he spent the first few years of his life in his Jewish parent’s home. These few but formative years were enough for him to understand his heritage. As an adult, he made a conscious decision that changed his life:

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Heb 11:24-26 (ESV)

The wicked may seem to prosper for a time, but they have no future. The righteous may face difficulties for a time, but their future is securely held in God's hand. In time and in eternity, we can know true peace – *shalom*.

Questions to Ponder

1. What are the promises God makes about your future?
2. How have you experienced God's peace in your life?
3. Where do you need to experience it more fully today?

Possible Prayer Points:

1. Ask God for an ever greater sense of His peace in your life. Share where you are tempted to fret. Now ask for the faith to entrust these things/situations/people to Him.
2. Reflect on the future you have in Christ – then spend some time thanking Him for that future! Ask for the grace to live in light of Whose you are and where you will be for eternity.

How will I put this into practice?

In God We Trust

Day 21

The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Psalms 37:39-40 (ESV)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – He provides everything we will ever need.

As we have read and reflected our way through Psalm 37 we have seen the heart and experience David had with God throughout his life. He has faced many challenges and battles where it seemed the wicked would have their way with him. However, time and again David's initial tendency to fret gave way to faith as time and again, God delivered him.

David now closes the Psalm with a final call to trust God – even in the most difficult of times. As he does so he draws a word picture of God and His faithfulness to those who love and follow Him.

“The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD” – David uses the name *Yahweh*, God's covenant name. God is the One who provided our ultimate salvation from our own sin through the loving provision of His Son, Jesus. As the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans:

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (ESV)

God's salvation is also experienced in our daily lives, as His enabling grace empowers us through the most challenging of times. In His time, all things will be made right!

“He is their stronghold” – A stronghold was a place where soldiers could take a stand. Here they found protection, firm ground and every available advantage the land could offer. God Himself is our source of strength and safety. He will enable us to stand in the most challenging situations with grace, humility and courage. Jesus taught that if we trust Him and His word we will:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. Matt 7:24-25 (ESV)

There is only one thing we are required to do to experience God's deliverance – **"Take refuge in Him"** – While we cannot deliver ourselves, God calls us to take a step of faith – to trust Him. This starts with Saving Faith in Jesus Christ. Then, daily, we spend time with Him in His Word and prayer. We then grow as Fully Devoted Followers, trusting and obeying Him and His Word.

Questions to Ponder

1. Having completed Psalm 37, what are 2-3 key things God has said to you?
2. What steps of growth is He calling you to make in your life?

Possible Prayer Points

1. Take time to ask God to make you aware of His presence in your life; to enable you to walk in His grace; to extend His blessings and provision to you.
2. When were some times when God's grace sustained you through a challenging time? A time when He delivered you from a dangerous situation? Thank Him for those times!
3. Ask God to grace you to make praying for His presence and protection a part of your daily prayer life.

How will I put this into practice?

GOD

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**21 Days of Prayer & Fasting
Daily Devotional Guide 2017**

For Children!



In God We Trust

Psalm 37 for *Children!*

Introduction: What wonderful material we have for our time of prayer and fasting this year; it is, however, somewhat challenging to bring to the level of Pre K and younger elementary-age children. Our devotional material for the young ones will use activities, will ask parents/guardians to look back at their own life stories to share, and will use other Bible stories to illustrate the verses on which we are focusing.

The few days that are particularly “difficult-concept” for study are marked *OC for Older Children. On those days I heartily recommend reading Paul Dallgas-Frey’s WONDERFUL version of Psalm 37 in 7 Parts for kids. Check out the website:

<http://www.essex1.com/people/paul/Psalms.html>.

It is also linked to our Right Now Media special training!

I suggest reading the children’s material at least one day in advance to determine your plan for presenting to your children: you know best what is appropriate for their levels of understanding.

Please see Grace Pointer, “Prayer and Fasting with Children,” available on the Connect@Home Front Porch, for more general information about fasting with children. Or check out the digital version on Right Now Media! Also on Right Now Media you will find a video for children about the poetry of the Psalms. Simply log in to Right Now Media with your account (contact the Grace office for an invitation if you need one) then enter Psalm 37 in the search bar; this will take you to our Customized Training Section.

God bless you as you bless your children!

Miss Kelly

Supplies List:

Every Day - A Bible in a child-friendly version (verses here are NIV)

Some Days - A computer with Right Now Media Account, paper and printer

Day 1 - Paper, black or green marker, white paint

Day 3 - Psalm 37:4 Coloring Page from Grace's Right Now Media, crayons/pencils

Day 4 - Supplies for sun catchers or a light experiment or flashlights

Day 10 - A jar with lid, some ice, matches, hot water

Day 11 - Boxes to fill with mission donations or a jar into which to save

Day 12 - Slinky (Be sure to get a real Slinky; the cheap, plastic ones don't work.)

OR blindfolds and a flashlight

Day 13 - May need supplies to be a blessing to an older person.

Day 14 - A large bowl of clean water, a bowl of non-staining paint, a bowl of chocolate syrup, a bowl of small cereal or broken cracker pieces, a towel.

Day 16 - AWANA books if applicable

Day 18 - Game or supplies to play at being patient

Day 20 - Calendar page printed from Right Now Media, markers to fill in and illustrate it

In God We Trust

Day 1

Don't be upset because of sinful people. Don't be jealous of those who do wrong. Like grass, they will soon dry up. Like green plants, they will soon die. (verses 1-2, NIV)

Key Thought: God delivers those who hope in Him – Therefore we are to be content with His provisions and not fret because of the prosperity of the wicked.

Talk about dandelions. Remind your children how they spring up in the yard one day and dry up and blow away just a couple of days later. This is how it is with people who do wrong - with people who don't accept Jesus' gift of eternal life. When we believe in Jesus, we live with Him forever.

Make a dandelion picture with this verse. One fun way to do this is to draw the stems and a "frame" then dot on the fuzzies with your children's fingerprints in white paint.

Day 2

Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live in the land and enjoy its food. (verse 3)

Key Thought: God delivers those who hope in Him – Therefore we can trust Him for everything!

So often we remind our children NOT to "do bad;" it is refreshing to work with them instead to do GOOD! Brainstorm ways they can do good this week: acts of service to their siblings, grandparents, schoolmates, teachers. The story of Dorcas (Greek name. In Aramaic it is Tabitha.) is a great one for this concept, and kids love to talk about how funny her name sounds to us. Tell them that it means *gazelle*. Be sure to talk about the effort required in Bible times to make a garment! End your time by agreeing to "do good" in a specific way this week.

Day 3

Find your delight in the Lord. Then he will give you everything your heart really wants. (verse 4)

Key Thought: God delivers those who find their delight in Him.

This verse begs to be illustrated! Either have your children letter the verse or print it from Grace Church Training on Rightnowmedia.org. (You will have to accept Grace Church's invitation to join Right Now Media in order to access this.) Enter Psalm 37 in the Search Bar (or click on Libraries/Grace Church; the coloring page will be under In God We Trust, Customized Training.

As you color, talk about finding delight in things. Ask your children what exactly this verse is promising - that we will receive everything we want? It is actually promising that our wants will line up with God's best for us when we delight in Him.

Day 4

Commit your life to the Lord. Here is what he will do if you trust in him. He will make the reward for your godly life shine like the dawn. He will make the proof of your honest life shine like the sun at noon. (verses 5-6)

Key Thought: God delivers those who hope in Him – By defending the righteous.

Pair this day's verses with an activity involving the sun or light! Make a suncatcher with colored tissue paper and contact paper, or do a science experiment involving light. Play a game of flashlight tag in the dark! Of course, talk about the way that dawn's light breaks through the darkness of night, and the noonday sun brightly reveals the world.

In God We Trust

Day 5

Be still and wait patiently for the Lord to act. Don't be upset when other people succeed. Don't be upset when they carry out their evil plans. (verse 7)

Key Thought: God delivers those who hope in Him – Therefore we can wait patiently for Him to deliver.

Talk about other people's successes and times when you have been envious. It is important to celebrate others' successes, just as we should grieve with them when they have troubles. When people behave badly and mean us harm, we can still respond with kindness. (Of course, children should never be encouraged to remain in unsafe situations! With them we are talking about childhood situation with classmates and siblings.)

Day 6

Turn away from anger and don't give in to wrath. Don't be upset, because that only leads to evil. Sinful people will be destroyed. But those who put their hope in the Lord will receive the land. (verses 8-9)

Key Thought: God delivers those who refrain from anger and leave justice in His hands.

These verses are especially relevant for children with siblings! We learn so much growing up in a household of brothers/sisters. The key for guiding kids through these verses, though, is to help them understand that they aren't refraining from anger and leaving justice in God's hands so that their siblings will be punished or suffer; it is because their behavior will be right and pleasing to the Lord. Refraining from anger and angry reactions also keeps situations from escalating. Share a story from your own childhood when you got this right - or a time when you didn't and wish you had!

OC Day 7

Sinful people make plans to harm those who do what is right. They grind their teeth at them. But the Lord laughs at those who do evil. He knows the day is coming when he will judge them. Sinners pull out their swords. They bend their bows. They want to kill poor and needy people. They plan to murder those who lead honest lives. But they will be killed by their own swords. Their own bows will be broken. (verses 12-15)

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked - When We are Persecuted.

With older children you might use the story of King Saul chasing David with jealousy and anger. The passage in 1 Samuel 24:1-22 is a perfect illustration of evil pursuing good.

With the little ones, read the next part of *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts* by Dallgas-Frey.

OC Day 8

Sinful people make plans to harm those who do what is right. They grind their teeth at them. But the Lord laughs at those who do evil. He knows the day is coming when he will judge them. Sinners pull out their swords. They bend their bows. They want to kill poor and needy people. They plan to murder those who lead honest lives. But they will be killed by their own swords. Their own bows will be broken. (verses 12-15)

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked - By Being Their Avenger.

All children can learn about NOT taking revenge, getting even in their terms. Remind them that a classmate or sibling against whom we have a grudge is not evil! We are much more likely to be in situations where we or others anger or upset people through carelessness and thoughtlessness. In these situations we also must not seek to get even. Talk about ways to end a quarrel or fight with someone in our lives.

This is another great day to read the next part of *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts*.

In God We Trust

OC Day 9

Those who do what is right may have very little. But it's better than the wealth of many sinners. The power of those who are evil will be broken. But the Lord takes good care of those who do what is right.
(verses 16-17)

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous among the Wicked - with the Strength to be Content with Little.

The comparison game is dangerous. All of us in our families must guard against this. Talk about a time when someone had something you wanted and what you learned from the situation. God always knows best for us and provides it. Ask the children if there is anything they have been envying that others have and then pray together about this.

Again for younger ones - the next section of *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts*.

OC Day 10

Those who are without blame spend their days in the Lord's care. What he has given them will last forever. When trouble comes to them, they will have what they need. When there is little food in the land, they will still have plenty. But sinful people will die. The Lord's enemies may be like flowers in the field. But they will be swallowed up. They will disappear like smoke. (verses 18-20)

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous among the Wicked - by helping them see their days in light of eternity.

This is a great few verses for a time of fasting! If you are fasting from food with your children, you can talk about being physically hungry and how God promises to provide for His people the food they need!

We have already talked about flowers withering in the field, so let's look at "disappearing like smoke." Check out our Training on Right Now Media for a fun cloud/smoke activity that you can do. Talk about the way smoke disappears. Now talk about the way that God's care for us helps us to last for all eternity.

Day 11

Sinful people borrow and don't pay back. But those who are godly give freely to others. The Lord will give the land to those he blesses. But he will destroy those he curses. (verses 21, 22)

Key Thought: God Upholds the Righteous Among the Wicked - By Giving Them a Spirit of Generosity.

What can we give? This is an excellent question to pose during family time! Children often surprise us by wanting to give their best; we should let them! Are there toys or household items that are still lovely and usable? Make a celebration of gathering them and delivering them to Home Sweet Home or to a family in need. Perhaps as part of fasting the money spent on something you are going without could be donated to the Crisis Pregnancy Center or to another charity.

Day 12

The Lord makes secure the footsteps of the person who delights in him, Even if that person trips, he won't fall. The Lord's hand takes good care of him. (verses 23, 24)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous - With a Hand to Uphold the Steps of their Lives.

Object Lesson: You will need a Slinky and a steps course for it. Talk about following the Lord's leading in our lives and how He guides us where we need to go. Start the Slinky at the top of the steps and say that the Lord guides us along our way to where we need to go just like the Slinky.

Another activity if you don't have a Slinky is to make a family chain with everyone blindfolded except the leader. Everyone holds hands and navigates through your house from one end to another. The leader represents God leading us where we need to go safely. Be sure that you don't let anyone stumble!

Day 13:

I once was young, and now I'm old. But I've never seen godly people deserted. I've never seen their children begging for bread. The godly are always giving and lending freely. Their children will be a blessing.

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous - By Providing for the Children of the Next Generation!

Talk about ways that children can be a blessing! One of the first ways that comes to mind is physical touch! Hugs or hand holding from children are unlike other touch. What are some other ways of blessing an older person? Write a note, make a craft, bake a snack, whatever your heart finds to do. Since the verse begins with the writer (David) being old, focus on blessing those who are old! Brainstorm people your children can bless in this way. The challenge is to bless them this week. Be sure to encourage them to report back with the success of their endeavor!

Day 14

Turn away from evil and do good. Then you will live in the land forever. The Lord loves those who are honest. He will not desert those who are faithful to him. (verses 27-28a)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous - Who Turn From Evil and Do Good.

This is a perfect day to focus on repentance. This could be time for turning from a favorite sin. Here is a super illustration for the way sin clings to us and how Jesus washes us clean:

<http://www.futureflyingsaucers.com/acts-19/>

You can find it on Right Now Media under Psalm 37 as well.

Do the activity then ask your children if there is any sin to which they are holding on? (Prayer may be an activity with parents and one child at a time.) Pray together for freedom from this sin.

OC Day 15

Those who do wrong will be completely destroyed. The children of sinners will die. Those who do what is right will be given the land. They will live in it forever. (verses 28b-29)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous – They will receive an eternal inheritance.

This is the most difficult day to cover with children without frightening them. No one likes to think about children dying because of their parents' sins, though we as adults sadly know this to be true (God's word always is!). You know whether or not your children are ready to hear verse 28b. In the event that they are, you might discuss the fact that our decisions effect those around us; parents' decisions particularly effect their children. A hard example of this is when a child is born with a drug addiction. Remind your children that in your household you are always trying to seek God's will. As believers, He guides you towards the best for your children. Promise your kids that you will always try your best for them.

Of course, all children are ready to hear verse 29 which is a powerful promise from God for those of us who believe. Focus on this with any aged child! Talk about what an inheritance is. Have you received one? Share this with your children and why it is precious to you. Discuss our eternal inheritance in heaven with the Lord and why it is the most precious!

For those who are not ready to hear verse 28b,
once again check out the *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts*.

Day 16

The mouths of those who do what is right speak words of wisdom. They say what is honest. God's law is in their hearts. Their feet do not slip. (verses 30-31)

Key Thought: God Blesses the Righteous – His Word provides wisdom and sure steps.

Ask your children to recite any verse from memory. Be sure you also take a turn. This is God's law in your hearts. Talk about your verses and ways that these particular ones will keep your feet from slipping and how they make you wise. If your children are in AWANA, this would be a great time to learn their verses for the week. Or commit to learning a verse as a family this week.

In God We Trust

OC Day 17

Those who are evil hide and wait for godly people. They want to kill them. But the Lord will not leave the godly in their power. He will not let them be found guilty when they are brought into court.
(verses 32-33)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – Even when the wicked seek to harm us.

The Esther story is a perfect illustration of this concept. Either tell the story with Bible open or read it from a Bible storybook for younger children.

This would also be a great day to read one of the parts of Dallgas-Frey's *Psalm 37 in 7 parts*.

Day 18

Put your hope in the Lord. Live as He wants you to. He will honor you by giving you the land. When sinners are destroyed, you will see it. (verse 34)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – Even when He deems to delay His response to our need.

Waiting is hard! Waiting patiently is even harder! When we are waiting on the Lord, though, we can be sure of the outcome. The idea is waiting with our eyes wide open, because we know what He does will be amazing!

Make a game of being patient. Have the children complete some routine task in a way that requires patience or play a game that requires it.

They can perform this cooperatively or as a competition. Some ideas are: using chopsticks to stack blocks or pieces of cork, playing Jenga, counting small objects, cooking dinner and waiting for the results!

OC Day 19

I saw a mean and sinful person. He was doing well, like a green tree in its own land. But he soon passed away and was gone. Even though I looked for him, I couldn't find him. (verses 35-36)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – The gains of the wicked are short-lived.

With older children, talk about times when they have observed people who have been wicked and have seemed to succeed. Discuss the difference between human success and success in God's eyes. Even the longest human life is short in comparison with eternity. We need to help our children understand that unforgivable wickedness is rejecting God, and of course, we should never wish that on anyone. Earthly success is not a measure of worth or of relationship with God.

For younger children, consider reading one of the parts of Dallgas-Frey's *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts*.

Day 20

Consider honest people who are without blame. People who seek peace will have a tomorrow. But all sinners will be destroyed. Those who are evil won't have a tomorrow. (verses 37-38)

Key Thought: The Lord is our Stronghold – He provides a future for the righteous.

Since as believers we will have a tomorrow, make a calendar for the next month of challenges and activities your child can complete. A blank month calendar is on our Training Center in Right Now Media. Don't feel as if every day must have something to do, and be sure you list activities in which your child is already participating: AWANA or Sunday school. Provide your child with stickers or a marker to track his/her progress. Make one calendar for your family or one for each person. Celebrate your successes and encourage each other over failings. Talk about the fact that none of us is blameless in our own right. It is only because God looks at us and sees us as clean because of Jesus' blood.

In God We Trust

Day 21

**The Lord saves those who do what is right. He is their place of safety when trouble comes. The Lord helps them and saves them He saves them from sinful people because they go to him for safety.
(verses 39-40)**

To end our time of prayer and fasting, these verses call for a rousing game of tag with, of course, a safe place - "home!" Recall a time of trouble you have had and how the Lord blessed you when you clung to Him as your home base. Share this story with your children. David's most-known Psalm 23 would be an excellent reading to finish your final night of this series.

Your prayer tonight should include asking God to help each member of your family (by name!) to do what is right. If there are any who are yet unsaved, pray for their salvation. Thank God for any lessons learned during these days of fasting and prayer. Also thank Him for the things you have fasted from, reminding your children that He provides everything in our lives!

If you have been *Psalm 37 in 7 Parts*, be sure to read the final part as you wrap up In God We Trust!

My Notes...

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; for those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand. I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. For he Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off. I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found. Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.