

THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.



40
Days

A Spiritual Journey With The
GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST
Gulf Shores, AL

January 5 - February 13, 2014

40 Days of Prayer – The Story

As we transition into the New Testament portion of **The Story**, and begin a new year, let's pray that God will...

... **T**ouch our hearts with His **STORY** of love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. [John 3:16-17 NIV]

... **T**rain our hearts as we share His **STORY** with one another

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparable great power for us who believe. [Eph. 1:17-19 NIV]

... **T**ransform our hearts to live His **STORY** in the world

And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him. ... This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors. [2 Cor. 5:18b-20 LB]

As a church family, it is our prayer that you will join us in our 40-day commitment to seek God's guidance and blessing for 2014. When we prepared this booklet, we made it a goal to provide material and challenges to help each of us grow spiritually throughout these next few weeks. Since our lessons beginning this year will be inspired by **The Story**, starting in Matthew's gospel, we thought it would be good to start by focusing on some of the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Enter through the narrow gate.
For wide is the gate and broad is the road
that leads to destruction,
and many enter through it.
But small is the gate and narrow the road
that leads to life,
and only a few find it.
(Matthew 7:13-14)*

Why forty days? It seems to be a time not too long that it becomes unmanageable, yet a time long enough to see something significant done. Forty days of rain to convince Noah and his family that their only hope is Jehovah God and to convince mankind from that time on that God is serious about sin. Forty days for Elijah to walk to the sacred mount when he lost his courage and, in essence, lost his faith. Forty days for Jesus to fast and be tempted as He prepared for His ministry. If God felt His Son needed those forty days to prepare for His three year ministry and trek to the cross, then we can certainly use forty days in our pursuit of spiritual maturity and growth. Are you ready to get started?

DAY #1 = January 5, 2014

Today's Challenge: Plan a time each day to utilize this booklet. Mark it on your calendar. Put the booklet in a place that is visible. Place your Bible next to the booklet. Make a commitment to God to give your best to Him during the next 40 days. Take the first step toward a great walk with the Lord and get ready for God to bless you in amazing ways. Remember hundreds are joining you in this journey!

Today's Bible Reading: **Matthew 1-7**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Give yourselves to God...surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes."* (**Romans 6:13**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to prepare the hearts of those who will hear His Story.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Billy & Bobbie Bowen** (Billy's b-day was yesterday), **The Osborn Family** (Max, Sonja, Peyton, Zora), **Gary & Joanne Nading** (their anniversary was January 1), **Ed & Laura Mohar**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about this 40 day challenge. How do you feel about it? What do you hope God will do in you? How can you use the lessons from today to help you in your walk with the Lord?

DAY #2 = January 6, 2014

Today's Challenge: It's a Monday. Nobody says "TGIM!" unless you are selling caffeine products. So, make this a Monday to remember. Wear a smile on your face all day. And, if you are just wrapping up your day make that your commitment for tomorrow! Plan to smile ALL day and see if it is contagious. Need a little help? Listen to some Christian music. Think positive thoughts. Surround yourself with positive people. If all else fails, call a positive person and tell them you need a pep talk!

Today's Bible Reading: **Matthew 8-12**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Now, Lord... enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness."* (**Acts 4:29**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for those who will be telling The Story.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The O'Byrne family** (Kelly, Carolyn, Alyssa, Dixie, and Daisy – new members), **Frances Dorr, Eli Cross, Gene & Teeny Wade**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about what you think about **The Story**. Take some time to read chapter 22 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("The Birth of the King"). What will you take away from this material?

DAY #3 = January 7, 2014

Today's Challenge: Everyone likes a kind word of encouragement. Take some time to send someone an encouraging message (call, IM, tweet, post, text, email, etc.). Say something thoughtful and positive. Then, pray God uses your words to build them up. If you are in a relationship, focus on those individuals first.

Today's Bible Reading: **Matthew 13-18**

Today's Bible Verse: *"For the Word of God is living and active..."* (**Hebrews 4:12a**)

Today's Prayer: Praise God for speaking to us through the Bible.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Kathy Lyerla** (her b-day is today), **Keith & Barbara Hall** (Keith's b-day is today), **Dennis McClanahan** (new member), **Don & Pam Barcus**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about the person (or people) you encouraged through today's challenge. How did they respond? Whom would you like to encourage next week? How can you plan ahead for those words of encouragement?

DAY #4 = January 8, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today is our mid-week Bible study. Make plans to attend. Lay aside all the things you want to do and focus on what you need to do. Don't get overwhelmed with urgent things... do the important things. There is a difference. You have a choice. Choose wisely, seek God's will, and ask God to bless your day! And, as if you needed the incentive tonight is our monthly Wednesday night supper! See you at 6 PM!

Today's Bible Reading: **Matthew 19-24**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."* (**Matthew 7:7**)

Today's Prayer: Ask the Lord for guidance as we seek him.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Harrison Family** (Stephen, Nick, Luke), **The Fountain Family** (Philip, Michele, John Carey), **Jim & Joyce Doughty, Jan Barnes**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about our mid-week study. Which Bible characters discussed so far in **The Story** are your favorite? Why? How can you use these Bible characters as mentors in your own spiritual walk?

DAY #5 = January 9, 2014

Today's Challenge: Everybody needs a "Good Samaritan." Right? I'm glad you agree, because today you are going to be that person! Look for an opportunity to do a good deed today. Take donuts to the office. Bake cookies for a friend. Help someone who needs a hand. Use your hands and feet to be like Jesus. Be bold and courageous. You never know how some good deed could change a person's life forever.

Today's Bible Reading: **Matthew 25-28**

Today's Bible Verses: *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up..."* **Ephesians 4:11-12**

Today's Prayer: Thank God for the leaders of our church family and pray for more good leaders.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Bob & Patty Way, Brandon Whitsett, Carol Hoeft, Charles & Deborah Crosby**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about the person you helped today, or are planning on helping. What's better than random acts of kindness? Planned acts of kindness. Who would you like to help next week?

DAY #6 = January 10, 2014

Today's Challenge: People love Friday. Why? For most of us, it marks the last day of the work week. People are usually in good spirits and can't wait to get involved in weekend plans. Since everyone seems to be happy, take advantage of this opportunity to talk to people freely about how God is blessing your life. Challenge yourself to be open and honest with people about your Christian walk. God is good! All the time!

Today's Bible Reading: **Mark 1-6**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:31-32)*

Today's Prayer: Pray that this Story experience will lead us to truth, freedom and hope in Christ Jesus.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Cason Family** (Tommy, Cathy, Blake, Joshua, Elise – today is Tommy's b-day and Cathy has a birthday on January 31st), **Larry & Terri Cason, The Stidham Family** (David, Deborah, Will), **Matthew & Katie Sherrier, Stephen Stidman**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about your week. What have you accomplished? What obstacles has Satan thrown in front of you? How is God helping you to overcome?

DAY #7 = January 11, 2014

Today's Challenge: It's Saturday! A day of rest. A day for fun. Make plans to spend time with your family today. Read **The Story** together or discuss **The Story** over dinner (remember we are studying chapter 22 tomorrow). If your family is far away, take this opportunity to call them and tell them about your experience with **The Story**. Share insight from your personal journey.... but don't forget to listen to their story.

Today's Bible Reading: **Mark 7-11**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* (**James 1:22**)

Today's Prayer: Confess our lack of attention to God's word.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Drue Bailey** (today is her b-day), **Luther & Jane Mixson, Carol Robirds, Wimp & Annette Sanderson**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about family time. What did you do? What do you hope to do? What trips/events could you plan this year to benefit your entire family?

DAY #8 = January 12, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today is the Lord's day! The first day of the week. Our lessons for today will revolve around "The Birth of a King." Everything we studied in the Old Testament section of **The Story** is starting to take shape. The people were waiting for the King to come. Jesus is the Messiah! Be sure to attend all of our services today and give glory to the King of Kings!

Today's Bible Reading: **Mark 12-16**

Today's Bible Verse: *"One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts."*
Psalms 145:4

Today's Prayer: Pray for our friends and family as we share God's story with them.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Carole Gerety, Bill & Margaret Gerety, Chase Gerety, Jim & Jo Atherton**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about worship today. What songs did you enjoy the most? What did you think of the lessons? Whom did you sit next to and how did you encourage them to walk with the Lord this week?

DAY #9 = January 13, 2014

Today's Challenge: Plan your week out with God on top! Put him first. Commit to spending at least 10 minutes in prayer when you start each day this week. Find a quiet spot and talk to God. Then see if that makes a difference in your day. If you are in a relationship, or have a family, take at least one day to pray with them as well (i.e. Monday alone, Tuesday with spouse, Wednesday with a child, etc.).

Today's Bible Reading: *"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity..."* **(Hebrews 6:1a)**

Today's Bible Verse: **Luke 1-4**

Today's Prayer: Pray for spiritual growth in our church.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Paul & Linda Starnes, Janice Sellers, Austin Sellers, Dorsa Sparks, Louise Smith**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 23 in ***The Story*** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("Jesus' Ministry Begins"). Also, use the space below to add some people to your personal prayer list. Who are you concerned about? Why? How would you like to see God working in their lives?

DAY #10 = January 14, 2014

Today's Challenge: The world is full of children that desperately need a mentor. Maybe you know a child that needs an encourager. Pray for them. Then, make some time to do something about it. Be a volunteer for their activities. Have them over to the house for dinner. Take them out for an activity. Be creative and make a difference. Try to encourage them with both your words and your actions.

Today's Bible Reading: **Luke 5-9**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"* **(Matthew 19:14)**

Today's Prayer: Ask God to bless our children as they learn of His love for them.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Larry & Gwen Rideout, Angie Sundie, Johnny & Nancy Hood, Gene & Rita Calvert**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about children in today's society. How have things changed? What can you do to make a difference with the youth of our culture? What good things have you noticed, especially with our young people in the church family?

DAY #11 = January 15, 2014

Today's Challenge: It's the mid-week. Half-way through. No matter if the week is half-full or half-empty... Your week is not over. You still have enough time to do some important things. Tonight we have Bible study and you know how important study is for you, your family, and the church family. Make plans not only to attend, but to give it all you got! Bring your Bible. And bring a Christ-like spirit! It's going to be a GREAT day!

Today's Bible Reading: **Luke 10-13**

Today's Bible Verse: "*Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.*" (**Psalm 34:3**)

Today's Prayer: Thank the Lord that his written word is so accessible to us.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Taylor Johns** (today is her spiritual b-day), **Kali Chavies** (today is her spiritual b-day), **Wannah Thompson, Tommy & Shannon Boatright, Hunter Tidmore, Skyler Tidmore, The Holman Family** (Jason, Lesley, Tucker & Tyler), **Laykon Holman & Alexis, Alex Holman**

Today's Devotional: We are more than ¼ through the 40 days. Take this opportunity to reflect on what it has meant to you to have daily devotions, readings, prayers, and prayer targets. What have you enjoyed the most about this booklet? What would you change? When you feel comfortable share those thoughts with the staff.

DAY #12 = January 16, 2014

Today's Challenge: Tomorrow begins the GULF Youth Rally at the Orange Beach Conference Center. Many of our youth, and hundreds of others, will converge on our community to engage in praise, worship, and fellowship. Take some time to encourage Jon & Rachel, the youth, and our many volunteers that are helping to ensure its success. If you have not found a way to help out call/text Jon: 295-1475 because we can use you!

Today's Bible Reading: **Luke 14-19**

Today's Bible Verse: "*Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior, and my hope is in you all day long.*" (**Psalm 25:4**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that we will be challenged by each week's message.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Vail Family** (Chris, Amber, Tinsley – today is Chris' b-day), **Emera Lang, The Deloach Family** (Charles, Veronica, Alexis), **Paul & Dorothy Keblaitis**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about the way God has led you to where you are now. What hurdles have you overcome? How has God walked with you? If you could summarize your story in five sentences, what would you say?

DAY #13 = January 17, 2014

Today's Challenge: Friday is here! If you are participating in GULF, you have longed for this day all year! For those who have worked hard all week, you are probably elated to enjoy some time off. No matter your plans, challenge yourself to pause every few moments today to say "Praise the Lord." Because God is good and He deserves to hear you say it. Add it to your vocabulary. You never know, it might stick!

Today's Bible Reading: **Luke 20-24**

Today's Bible Verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (**John 3:16**)

Today's Prayer: Praise God for Jesus Christ, the ultimate expression of His love.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Bill & Bonnie Hanks, Steve & Nilda Phillips, Jeannie Garrett, Bill & Dana Cochran**

Today's Devotional: Yesterday we considered how good God has been to us and journaled our thoughts about Him. Now, take some time to describe how God has used other people to touch your life (at least three people). Consider how these people have blessed you throughout your Christian journey.

DAY #14 = January 18, 2014

Today's Challenge: Tomorrow is the first day of the week. Don't wait to get yourself in a "worship" frame of mind. Before you pillow your head try doing these things: praise God for His greatness (prep for praying and singing) consider the death of Jesus on the cross (prep for communion), if you haven't read chapter 23 of **The Story** do it now (prep for classes/sermons), and lay aside your offering. Then, focus on what you can do to enjoy the greatest assembly of the week! Praise the Lord for Sunday! His day!

Today's Bible Reading: **John 1-5**

Today's Bible Verse: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (**James 1:5**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God for wisdom as we apply His story to our own life story.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Claude & Carole Lipscomb, The Spivey Family** (Brandon, Shannon, Devin, Dylan), **Raeleigh Duddy, Billy & Peggy Cunningham**

Today's Devotional: How "wise" do you feel? How do you use your words to inspire or encourage? Jesus was called "The Word of God" or the "mouthpiece" of God. Use the space below to journal your thoughts about how you can change your thoughts and words to be the mouth of God to others.

DAY #15 = January 19, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today belongs to the Lord! Join the church family for Bible study and worship today and prepare to be blessed. Also, prepare to be a blessing to others as we commune and worship together. Our lessons for today will revolve around Jesus' Ministry. No one ever did ministry like Jesus. He was a trail blazer. That means He did things that no one ever did before Him. He touched the leper. He held the children. He spoke to Samaritan women. He embraced Gentiles. He was a rabbi that visited the sick. What an example! As we worship together today, try to seek ways you can model your life after Jesus.

Today's Bible Reading: **John 6-9**

Today's Bible Verse: *"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."* (**Colossians 1:28-29**)

Today's Prayer: Thank God for those who prepared the materials for our study.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Joe & Ginger Tabor, Lou & Elaine Rigsby, Marshall Street, Jack & June Posey**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about worship today. What songs did you enjoy the most? What did you think of the lessons? How can you use this lesson in your daily walk?

DAY #16 = January 20, 2014

Today's Challenge: When you look at January 20th on a calendar, what do you see? This is a day set aside by our Federal government to remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Who was this man? He was a great leader. Try to find a way to be a leader today. Get involved. Volunteer to go first. Take on the extra project. Ignore the critics. Stand tall. And let God use you to accomplish great things.

Today's Bible Reading: **John 10-15**

Today's Bible Verse: *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."* (**John 16:13**)

Today's Prayer: Praise God for His Holy Spirit who guides us.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Roger & Charlene Quick, Gail Birge, Barbara Stewart, Kelli Pate** (today is her spiritual b-day), **James & Linda Brown**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 24 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Wednesday ("Jesus, No Ordinary Man"). Also, use the space below to journal how you view the New Testament part of **The Story** thus far in our study.

DAY #17 = January 21, 2014

Today's Challenge: I wonder how people are responding to your kind words of encouragement? Take some time to send someone an encouraging message (call, IM, tweet, post, text, email, etc.). Make sure it is someone different than before. Be selective. Be purposeful. Say something thoughtful and positive. Try using Scripture. Then, pray God uses your words to build them up.

Today's Bible Reading: **John 16-21**

Today's Bible Verse: *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."* (**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for our families as they experience **The Story** of the Bible together.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Phil & Sue Carroll, J.T. Woods, Anita Church, Tom & Elaine Davenport**

Today's Devotional: For your devotional time today make a list of people who have encouraged you over the past year. It could be a teacher, mentor, parent, or friend. Who are they (list at least 5)? Hopefully you have sent them a word of encouragement and expressed your appreciation for them. Now, take this time to praise God for them. Spend some time in prayer praying that God will bless them as much as they have blessed you.

DAY #18 = January 22, 2014

Today's Challenge: Hopefully you have taken some time to read chapter 24 in **The Story**. Tonight, during our mid-week service, we will use this lesson as the basis of our study ("Jesus, No Ordinary Man"). In preparation for our study, challenge yourself to see past the ordinary. Jesus could look into the heart of a person. He saw the good inside people. Try to see people like that today. Ignore their flaws. Choose to see goodness.

Today's Bible Reading: **Acts 1-4**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."* (**II Timothy 2:22**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for conviction of sin in our lives and the willingness to repent.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Tony & Sheila Crumbley, Bob & Barbara Garland, Dan & Carolyn Abston, Julianne Naumann** (this was Gene's spiritual b-day)

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about tonight's study. How did the world see Jesus? How do you see Jesus? How can others see Jesus in you?

DAY #19 = January 23, 2014

Today's Challenge: The Lord is working in you. You may not see it, but if you are a Christian, it is true! God has placed His Holy Spirit in you. You should live with purpose. With passion. With zeal. Today could be a "me" day. Take one. You deserve it. Focus on what God's spirit is urging you to do. Take an early lunch. Find a quiet place. Do something David did. Meditate. Think about God's purpose for your life. He is writing your story! Do you think others would want to read it? Allow God take the pen. Surrender to His will.

Today's Bible Reading: **Acts 5-9**

Today's Bible Verse: *"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."*
(Philippians 2:13)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to make our hearts receptive to His story and protect our minds from distractions.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Joe & Bettye Jo McClusky, Kelly & Maddie Brannon** (new members), **Michael & Kathy Hahn, Charlie & Ann Canady, Neal & Patsy Canady**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 25 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("Jesus, the Son of God"). Also, use the space below to add more people to your personal prayer list. Consider those who are sick and shut-in. How can God help them? What specific needs could you lift up?

DAY #20 = January 24, 2014

Today's Challenge: This day marks the half-way point in our 40 days together. As a collective body we have commended this time to devotion and spiritual renewal. Since it is a congregational challenge, we urge you today to spend some time with someone else engaged in this study. Personal visits would be great, but if time does not permit, calling or messaging would suffice. Encourage each other to keep on keeping on! Discuss how you are both growing through this experience.

Today's Bible Reading: **Acts 10-15**

Today's Bible Verse: *"And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him... This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors."*
(II Corinthians 5: 18b-20)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to be our voice as we boldly share our testimony with those who need Jesus.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Ken & Brenda Morris** (today is Ken's b-day), **Roy & Carolyn Ayers, Marlin & Marlana Hanner, Ken & Betty Laymon, The Murrell Family** (Jim, Brandee, Viola, Jeremiah)

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about God's vision for the church family. What do you see God doing? What do you think He has planned for us in 2014?

DAY #21 = January 25, 2014

Today's Challenge: The weekend has arrived! How are things with your family? It would be a great day to spend quality time with your family. Plan a short trip. There are plenty of places to go and things to do in our community. Go out to eat. Walk on the beach (bundle up). Play a board game together. Read **The Story** together or discuss **The Story** over dinner (remember we are studying chapter 25 tomorrow). Make it a day to remember, but don't leave God out of it. Give Him the glory!

Today's Bible Reading: **Acts 16-21**

Today's Bible Verse: *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (I John 3:1)*

Today's Prayer: Praise God for the abundant grace He has poured out upon His people.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Margaret Wilson, Viva Baldwin, The Melton Family** (Darrell, Cindy, Kyle), **Hunter Melton, Amanda Mitchell**

Today's Devotional: Where did you go today? What did you do? If you didn't take advantage of this time with family, why not? What can you plan for another day? Use the space below to journal your thoughts about the need for quality family time.

DAY #22 = January 26, 2014

Today's Challenge: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! Today we get to worship our Creator. Our lessons for today will revolve around Jesus as the Son of God. Many of the things Jesus did revealed His true nature. How do you see Jesus? He was positive and welcoming. Challenge yourself to be like Him today in worship. Sit in a new part of the building. Sit with new people. Take the time to talk to visitors. Choose to sit with someone who needs some encouragement. It might help your worship today. Also, don't forget our end of the month fellowship tonight after evening worship services!

Today's Bible Reading: **Acts 22-28**

Today's Bible Verse: *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (I Peter 2:24)*

Today's Prayer: Pray for salvation for those who have not taken that step.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Ken & Barbara Wilkerson, The Ross Family** (Joseph, Kayla, Cade), **The Allen Family** (Lem, Allison, Shelton, Reese, Hadley), **Bobby & Jerri Dickerson**

Today's Devotional: When you attend worship you probably notice people that are missing. Where did they go? Use the space below to journal your thoughts about how to win back the erring. List names of those who have fallen away and pray for them.

DAY #23 = January 27, 2014

Today's Challenge: Another manic Monday? That seems nearly impossible for those grounded in Christ. Because we know that God is with us! When you see someone stressing out, go to them, and then pray for them. Better yet, pray with them! Pause and ask God to be with them. Maybe they will come to know the peace that you have in Christ. It might open more doors in the future.

Today's Bible Reading: **Romans 1-6**

Today's Bible Verse: "...I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you..." (**II John 3**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for physical protection and good health for our leaders and participants.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Bonnie Jenkins, Sierra Carter, Destiny Carter, Jasmine Mitchell, Harryette Slaydon, Wes & Melissa Self**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 26 in *The Story* then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("The Hour of Darkness"). Also, use the space below to journal about those who are experiencing grief and sorrow at this time. It may be their hour of darkness. How is their loss affecting their personal walk with God? What can you do to help?

DAY #24 = January 28, 2014

Today's Challenge: The Bible has a lot to say about widows. God takes ministry to the widows seriously. In Romans 12 we can see that each of us have a talent. What is yours? Maybe it is encouraging those who are alone. Take some time to visit or call a widow. Check in on a lonely neighbor. Let God use you to be a blessing to someone who needs a word of love or an act of kindness.

Today's Bible Reading: **Romans 7-16**

Today's Bible Verse: "*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.*" (**Revelation 3:20**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that each person would sense God's presence in their personal studies.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Roger & Janice Bobo, Wendy Dugger, Dianne Carney, Clatis & Sheila Walker**

Today's Devotional: From time to time we need to do a spiritual inventory. Use the space below to list five of your spiritual gifts. Where are your talents? On the opposite side of that list... write ways that you can use those talents to the glory of the Lord. Consider a ministry or mission where you can use that talent and then take action to get active in the work of the Lord.

DAY #25 = January 29, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today is a day for cold water. What does that mean? Today should feel like a day of service. Consider your environment today. Work, school, or shopping? Seek out someone who needs a blessing. Do they a helping hand? Hold open the door. Give up your parking spot. Be a servant. Invite them to our mid-week Bible study tonight. It might change the way they view the world.

Today's Bible Reading: **I Corinthians 1-4**

Today's Bible Verse: *"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."* (**Matthew 10:42**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that God's blessings would be poured out on those who lead and serve.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Hayley Ross** (today is her b-day, spiritual birthday was January 15th), **Jimmy & Janet Foster** (today is Janet's b-day), **Teresa Denney, Tara Denney, Danny & Maggie Craddock**

Today's Devotional: After 25 days in this spiritual walk you have probably experienced some hurdles. Missing opportunities, skipping devotionals, sleeping through Bible class, or judging others. Why does this happen? Satan hates it when we choose to commit our time and work to the Lord. He especially hates it when God takes up all our time. Use the space below to journal your thoughts about why Satan hates the church and how he uses people and circumstances to frustrate us. Determine NOT to let Satan have control of your time. What can you do to stay grounded and faithful?

DAY #26 = January 30, 2014

Today's Challenge: Our words are powerful. They take root into the hearts of others. We are encouraged in the Bible to season our words with grace and speak the truth in love. Determine today that you will say NOTHING more than what love will allow. If you find that difficult consider how difficult it might be to take a vow of silence! Say positive, uplifting things today to all those around you.

Today's Bible Reading: **I Corinthians 5-10**

Today's Bible Verse: *"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* (**Psalms 119:103**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for God's power to touch each person's heart to respond to him with praise.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Buster & Barbara Herren** (today is Buster's b-day), **Jim & Melody Davis, Aaron & Ali Thomas, Pete & Betty Henries**

Today's Devotional: Why does God deserve praise? Use the space below to journal your thoughts about the awesomeness of God. Use words to describe His nature. Then, use those words in a prayer to Him.

DAY #27 = January 31, 2014

Today's Challenge: Ever watched a butterfly emerge from a cocoon? Google it. It is an amazing sight. What's more amazing is what you don't see. The transformation on the inside. Take an opportunity today to share your story with someone. Tell them how God is changing you from the inside out. If your into social media, use a tweet, a post, or a group message to let others know how much God means to you.

Today's Bible Reading: **I Corinthians 11-16**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* (**Matthew 5:6**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that our church would hunger and thirst for spiritual transformation.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Fetner Family** (Matt, Katie, Sam & Will - today is Katie's b-day), **The Hackett Family** (Jon, Rachel, Emily, Catherine), **Harold & Judy Hannah, Del & Sharon Hood**

Today's Devotional: God is not finished with you yet. You will shed your cocoon when you leave this world. Use the space below to journal what you would like to change right now in your life. What things would you like to give up? Are you willing to give them to God?

DAY #28 = February 1, 2014

Today's Challenge: How high have you been? Have you climbed a mountain? Flown high into the heavens? Rarely do we remember the deepest we have been. Unless you are into diving, it's just not something we consider often. God wants us to dive deep with Him. Take advantage of this Saturday and spend some time in prayer. Catch up on some reading (maybe chapter 26-27 in **The Story**). And get your heart ready for tomorrow. We have our open house for the community tomorrow. Invite some friends to spend the day with our church family. May God bless our day!

Today's Bible Reading: **II Corinthians 1-6**

Today's Bible Verse: *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe..."* (**Ephesians 1:17-19a**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that we would experience deeper relationships and changed lives.

Today's Prayer Targets: **John & Eloise Gill, Karen Gill, Tony Gill, Deana Gill, David & Carolyn Bowen**

Today's Devotional: We have been blessed with a new building. We are MORE blessed to have such a great family of believers. Use the space below to write down some ways you see our facilities as a blessing to our community. Then, consider how the people, THE TRUE CHURCH, can be a blessing to our community.

DAY #29 = February 2, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today is a BIG day! First of all, it is the Lord's Day. We are privileged to be able to worship our God today! Praise His Holy Name! Second, we have our open house. Make plans to attend and bring a friend. Finally, we have our Super Bowl party. What a great day for fellowship! Take advantage of it!

Today's Bible Reading: **II Corinthians 7-13**

Today's Bible Verse: *"You are the light of the world.' ...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* (**Matthew 5:14-15**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to lead us to those in our neighborhoods who need Jesus.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Tim & Sandy Larson** (their anniversary is today), **The Hale Family** (Ed, Theresa, Ashley), **Sue Hardy, Jim Forsythe, Gayle Forsythe**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about worship today. What songs did you enjoy the most? What did you think of the lessons? How can you use this lesson in your daily walk? Did you enjoy all of the other activities today?

DAY #30 = February 3, 2014

Today's Challenge: Prayer is a vital part of Christian living. We love worship. We love fellowship. We love Bible study. But we NEED prayer. It is our lifeline of communication to our Heavenly Father. Spend some time today compiling a list of people to pray for tonight. Invite your friends to help. Gather as many names as you possibly can and write them down. Before you head to bed pray for each of them and see what God does!

Today's Bible Reading: **Galatians & Ephesians**

Today's Bible Verse: *"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."* (**Colossians 1:9**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that God will bring groups together to share **The Story**.

Today's Prayer Targets: **LeNeta Burnett** (today is her b-day), **Evelyn Burnett, Alice Huffman, Addie Leix, Gerald & Johnie Mancill**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 27 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Wednesday ("The Resurrection"). Also, use the space below to add some people to your personal prayer list. Who are you concerned about? Why? How would you like to see God working in their lives?

DAY #31 = February 4, 2014

Today's Challenge: I hope you are past any shy, introverted nature by now. You can do this! Please, look back over some of these names we have prayed over together. Consider some that are still yet to come. Take a glance at the prayer list in the bulletin. Then, take some time out of your day to send one of them an encouraging message (call, IM, tweet, post, text, email, etc.). Say something meaningful and let God use your words to be a blessing.

Today's Bible Reading: **Philippians & Colossians**

Today's Bible Verse: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (**Ephesians 6:12**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God for spiritual protection for our leaders and participants.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Luke & Megan Retherford** (today is their anniversary), **George & Lucretia Owens, Ron & Susan McCoy, Clifford & Linda Spivey**

Today's Devotional: The Bible teaches us to arm ourselves with God's armor. We are spiritual warriors. Soldiers of the cross. Use the space below to journal your thoughts about what it means to be a soldier of Christ.

DAY #32 = February 5, 2014

Today's Challenge: Tonight, during our mid-week study, we are going to consider chapter 27 in **The Story**. We are considering the resurrection of Jesus. The death of Jesus is the sad part of the story. The resurrection is the happiest part! Make today a happy day! Choose to be happy, happy, happy! Send a message to 10 people today reminding them that God is good or that God loves them. Lift some spirits today!

Today's Bible Reading: **I & II Thessalonians**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (**Romans 12:2a**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that participants will have a renewed desire to pursue spiritual habits in their lives.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Scotty & Jane Sutherland** (today is Jane's b-day), **Donna Mitchell, Ruth Rogers, Maurice & Barbara Pittman**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about tonight's study. What insights did you take away from our time together? What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you? Have you been raised up with Jesus in baptism? Will you raise up with Jesus on the last day?

DAY #33 = February 6, 2014

Today's Challenge: This is another great day to be a servant. Don't wait for something to do, plan an act of kindness today. Listen and watch for opportunities to do good for others. Make it a goal to do at least five good deeds today. Don't do it with the attitude of getting something in return. Be selfless. Be like Jesus!

Today's Bible Reading: **I & II Timothy**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (**Matthew 20:26b-28**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for each person to have a servant's heart and to serve wherever needed.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Frank & Cathy Hughes** (today is Cathy's b-day), **Sted & Rebecca McCullough, Ryan Adams, Charli Adams, Goldie Sisco** (today is her spiritual b-day)

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 28 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("New Beginnings"). We move our focus to the Acts of the Apostles and some of the letters. Use the space below to journal what we know about the early church. What must be restored in us for us to be like the New Testament church? How can we be more like them?

DAY #34 = February 7, 2014

Today's Challenge: One of the things we see in the early church is their willingness to share their story, including their brokenness. Why were they willing to be so raw, open, and honest with each other? Why did they willingly confess their sins to one another? They had nothing to lose. Would you be willing to try it? Even for just a day? Find someone you can trust and pour your heart out. David had Jonathan. Hezekiah had Isaiah. You need someone too. Be careful to choose the right person, but don't hold back.

Today's Bible Reading: **Titus & Philemon**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Create in me a pure heart, O God..."* (**Psalm 51:10a**)

Today's Prayer: Praise God for the hearts that will be changed by this study.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Brian & Angel Lamar, Colton Lamar, Judy Booth, J.V. & Sandy Lamar, Nathan Bearden, Jena & Swayze Reneman**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to discuss what it means to confess ALL your sins. How do you feel when you confess your sins? Write some of your sins down. Use a separate sheet of paper. Remember that God knows all the secret things. When you are finished trash it, shred it, burn it, and ask God to forgive you. Then forgive yourself. Only then can you receive the peace that surpasses all understanding!

DAY #35 = February 8, 2014

Today's Challenge: The goal of our journey through **The Story** is more than just a personal journey. It is one we are making as a church family. Hopefully it has been a blessing to everyone involved! That was our prayer. However, we also hope this study will help us to be a blessing to our community. Take some time today to compile a list of things we can do to help our community. How can we be Jesus to them? How can God use our hands and feet? Write those ideas down (be prepared to share them with the staff). Then, spend some time in prayer focusing on tomorrow's worship service and family time. May God bless your day!

Today's Bible Reading: **Hebrews**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always..."* (**Matthew 28:20**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to powerfully use **The Story** to impact our community for Christ.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Reynolds Family** (Ray, Sarah, Luke, Seth, & Izak - today is Izak's b-day, the 6th was Luke's spiritual b-day), **David & Barbara High, Lex & Janet Moore** (new members)

Today's Devotional: We are called to be fishers of men, evangelists, teachers, and workers in the kingdom of the Lord. How is our effectiveness in our community? Use the space below to journal your thoughts about what we can do to improve in sharing the good news with those in our community.

DAY #36 = February 9, 2014

Today's Challenge: Today is a great day to worship the Lord! In our time together today we are considering chapter 28 in **The Story** and talking about new beginnings. We all need to be willing to try something new! Today we encourage you to do something radical... EVERYONE sit toward the front of the building. Don't pretend we are a close church family... let's be a close church family. Let's all sit in the center rows and only on the first 10-12 pews. You can do it! Let's draw close to one another and praise the Lord!

Today's Bible Reading: **James, I & II Peter**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."* (**Matthew 22:37**)

Today's Prayer: Pray that everyone will grow in their love of God – with all their heart, soul, and mind.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Barry & Pat Shackelford, Ken Rewekant, Will Smith, The Lee Family** (Robert, Robin Grant, Jackson, Jordon), **Tripp Lee**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about today's worship. What was it like? How did people respond to sitting so close together and to the front?

DAY #37 = February 10, 2014

Today's Challenge: Unity is a difficult thing. We want it. We need it. But it's difficult to achieve. We are selfish beings and we hesitate to do things unless there is some personal benefit. This is one of the reasons why we have challenged you so many times throughout this journey to practice selfless acts. Jesus was completely selfless. He died on the cross for OUR sins, not His own. This is the greatest example of love. Do you have someone that you love dearly? Do something selfless for them today. The bigger, the better.

Today's Bible Reading: **I, II, III John, Jude**

Today's Bible Verse: *"May they [believers] be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."* (**John 17:23**)

Today's Prayer: Ask God to maintain unity and harmony among leaders and participants.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Adrienne & Gracie Herren** (today is Gracie's b-day), **Joe & Rebecca Guinn** (today is Rebecca's b-day), **The Linam Family** (Randy, Laura, & Reed - today is Randy's b-day), **Cole Linam**

Today's Devotional: Take some time to read chapter 29 in **The Story** then journal what you think about this chapter. We will use this lesson to prepare for Sunday ("Paul's Mission"). Also, use the space below to add some people to your personal prayer list. Our 40 days are coming to an end, but you should commit to keeping up a designated time for prayer and devotional time each day.

DAY #38 = February 11, 2014

Today's Challenge: In our bulletin, we have several ministries listed. We also have some great Christian works, close to home and abroad. We support children's homes, camps, missionaries, and many other good works. Please pick one (or more) and write a card to them. Encourage them for their good work and let them know that we are praying for them. If you feel compelled to do so, send them a donation. It doesn't have to be big, just something to say, "We appreciate you and God bless you." Watch God use it for His glory!

Today's Bible Reading: **Revelation 1-7**

Today's Bible Verse: *"In a word, what I'm saying is, 'Grow up.' You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."* (**Matthew 5:48**)

Today's Prayer: Pray for lasting, eternal fruit in you and the church family.

Today's Prayer Targets: **The Davis Family** (Baker, Jana, Maryn, Sullivan & Mabry - today is Jana's b-day), **Jim & Rosa Willis** (today is Jim's b-day and their anniversary is on the 15th), **The Willis Family** (Mike, Celena, Makenna, Carson, Bailey)

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about what it means to grow in faith. Are you ever at the pinnacle of faith? Do we ever stop growing? Have we ever become completely mature?

DAY #39 = February 12, 2014

Today's Challenge: I'm not a huge fan of all of his theology, but when you consider his perspective of ministry, Rick Warren is a brilliant man. He once said of his church: "May our church be a 'place where the hurting, the hopeless, the discouraged, the depressed, the frustrated and confused can find love, acceptance, guidance and encouragement.'" That's what we should be striving for as a church family. To help us achieve this goal we need to invite these people into our fellowship. Today we encourage you to find the broken, helpless, and weak and invite them to join us Sunday. Let us be a blessing to them! Let us minister to and pray for them! Remember tonight we have our monthly fellowship. See you at 6 PM!

Today's Bible Reading: **Revelation 8-15**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest."* **(Matthew 11:28)**

Today's Prayer: Pray that those who visit our church will be warmly welcomed.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Our Community & Our Schools (Public, Private, Christian, Homeschool, etc.)**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about our time together during the mid-week service today. What classes and events could we offer to be more effective ministers to those we are seeking to serve? What specific things do you want us to address? Feel free to share those ideas with us.

DAY #40 = February 13, 2014

Today's Challenge: You made it! You should feel like you have accomplished an amazing goal today! God must be smiling down on you and the entire church family for being engaged in this spiritual journey. The final challenge of this 40 days is NOT to forget what you have learned. God's will is for you to draw near to Him every day and in every moment. Remember the song, "Sweet Hour of Prayer"? Could you do that today? If not could you schedule it tomorrow or this weekend? Make the time to spend one full hour in prayer. Use this booklet as a guide. You have plenty of names and things to pray about. We can almost guarantee it will be the most fulfilling hour of your day, but it may be the best hour of the year. Give it to God!

Today's Bible Reading: **Revelation 16-22**

Today's Bible Verse: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."* **(Psalm 119:105)**

Today's Prayer: Pray that **The Story** will be a defining experience in our church's journey.

Today's Prayer Targets: **Our Elders (Buster & Frank), Our Deacons (Larry, Ken, Randy, Barry), Our Ministers (Ray & Jon), Our Bible Class Teachers**

Today's Devotional: Use the space below to journal your thoughts about this entire 40 day journey. What have you benefited from the most? What will you do to keep up your spiritual growth?