

LEARN TO STOP REMAINING STAGNANT AND BEGIN TO

IN CR EA SE

DEVOTIONAL

INCREASE is more than a word—it is a promise rooted in the heart of God. In the Word of God we see a God who brings growth out of brokenness, purpose out of obedience, and abundance out of faithfulness. God's idea of increase often looks different from ours. While we may seek more—more resources, more influence, more success—God invites us first into deeper trust, greater obedience, and a more dependence on Him.

This devotional is an invitation to learn what true increase looks like in the life of a believer and in the life of our church. As we journey together, we will reflect on how God increases our faith, our love for one another, our impact in the world, and our alignment with His will. May these moments of reflection prepare our hearts to receive not just more from God, but more of God.

Philippians 2:7-9

*“...but emptied
Himself, by taking the
form of a servant,
being born in the
likeness of men. And
being found in human
form, He humbled
Himself by becoming
obedient to the point
of death, even death
on a cross. Therefore
God has highly
exalted him and
bestowed on him the
name that is above
every name”*

THE PROCESS OF INCREASE

Many people are interested in the product of increase. They like the idea of 'more.' More of what they want in life: joy, friends, greater witness, resource, grace, etc. While these are all great things to desire, none of them comes without a price. This is why we cannot stop our focus on the product of increase without looking beyond to the process of increase. To make more friends, you may need to work on yourself to become the kind of person who encourages others and invests in relationships. To have more resources, you might need to start a savings process or work more diligently.

For any increase, there will be intent and investment. If we only focus on the product of increase without an intentional strategy, we will be aimless. Thankfully, we have the greatest mind and supernatural wisdom available to us; the mind of Christ! It only takes getting alone with God and praying to hear His voice. The Holy Spirit will guide you and show you how to go about the work that it will take to bring increase. Once you get the intent, then it is time for an investment.

This is where we work the plan God has given us. Your investment could be time, prayer, financial, or many other things. Be brave! If God put the plan together, He will give you the grace with your investment. There is a key factor in your intent and investment: Humility. This is a huge part of this process. Jesus humbled himself to become a man and ultimately to the point of death on the cross. Philippians chapter 2, verse seven through nine tells us that because of his humility, God exalted him to the highest place. This is why the prayer of Jabez is so important. It shows us that Jabez humbled himself and asked God for an increase, along with the things that go into the process. Things like staying away from evil and not causing pain. Also, that the hand of God would be upon him. This is another way of asking God

for His grace to empower him. We have to be humble enough to admit that we cannot do this on our own. We need God to step in with His power to bring about the plan and process that will bring the increase.

What is the God dream for your increase? Take some time to get alone with God and pray. Seek His plan and the process to follow. Set your heart on the intent to humble yourself and invest the time and effort required to carry out the plan. Trust God that He will meet you with His own intent and investment of grace to empower you and bring about increase. Finally, if the process is going to be carried out to completion, you have to remain in Him. Jesus talked about this with His disciples in John 15. Some translations call this abiding. It means to live, to stay, and to dwell in. Jesus showed us that if we abide in Him and He in us, then we will bear much fruit; increase! If you detach from Jesus, His person, His plan, and His process, then there will be no fruit. But if you live, stay, and dwell in Him, get ready for increase!

Reflections & Application:

1. *Ensure you are intentional in setting time aside to hear from God.*
2. *What specific area is God asking you to be brave and have intent and invest?*
3. *What does humility look like? How will you remain humble?*

-Pastor Dan Roth

Ephesians 4:15 NKJV

*“...but, speaking the
truth in love, may
grow up in all things
into Him who is the
head—Christ—”*

INCREASE IN MATURITY

In verse 11 in the New Living Translation, it says that Christ placed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in the Body of Christ—the Church—to equip God’s people to do the work of the ministry, building up the Body of Christ. These people, called to these offices, would continue to minister until we all come to unity in our faith and the knowledge of God’s Son, to maturity, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

- *Is the Body of Christ, the Church universal, unified in love and purpose?*
- *Are we, as believers, mature, not caught up in the “winds of doctrine” that toss us to and fro, discerning when we are being deceived from the truth?*
- *Are we able to “speak the truth in love” with each other, growing in every way to be more and more like Christ?*
- *Are we all doing our part to help our brothers and sisters grow, so that the whole Body of Christ is healthy, growing, and full of the love of God for one another?*

The answer to all of these questions is “no”, decidedly not! So we still definitely need these callings in the Body of Christ. Whether the various parts of the Body call men and women of God the names given these offices or not, their function is apparent and God is using men and women of God to grow up the Church!

A major identifying trait as to whether someone is mature or not, is that they can: “speak the truth in love”! What does that mean? That they are abrupt and rude and “give people a piece of their mind” as to what others should or shouldn’t be doing, often coming

across as unsympathetic or judgmental? I believe the key is found in the Word, TRUTH...

There are many facts that exist in the lives of others, but what is the TRUTH of God's Word for them; what does God say about them? When we, in love, express to others what God's Word says about them, that they are:

- Fearfully and wonderfully made... (Psalm 139:14)
- Created in the very image of God... (Genesis 1:27)
- Created to do good works... (Ephesians 2:10)

... Then we instill faith in their hearts that they can be overcomers in every area of life. We side with what God says, what His Word says, and not what the Enemy has determined for their lives—failure, defeat, and utter ruin. We are on the same team! Going in the same direction!

We are members of one another—when my sister or brother grows strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, then they, in turn, can strengthen me in my low moments. We become a powerful force, the Church Triumphant, thwarting all attacks of the Enemy against us!

But what if a brother or sister is in sin? Are we just to ignore it, pat them on the back, and say "It's all good"?? Again, those may be the present facts regarding their situation, but we can speak what God's Word says about them in prayer—praying that they will "come to repentance to the acknowledging of the truth..." (2 Timothy 2:24-26). And then if God should open the door to speak into their lives, to go in humility and an attitude of faith that they were created for more. Here is our instruction:

2 Timothy 2:24-26 NKJV – And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach,

patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do His will.

Let us increase in maturity, speaking the Truth in love and therefore “grow up in Him”...

Reflections & Application:

1. *Ponder the questions above. Ask yourself, “Am I guilty of being immature in any of these areas?”*
2. *Think of some other verses than the ones listed that help you identify with who God says you are, and what God says you have. Spend some time thinking of what God’s Word says about you, seeing yourself as He sees you.*
3. *Practice exhorting the ones you come in contact with today by telling them what God says about them.*

- Pastor Sue Bryan

Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

*“But seek first His
kingdom and His
righteousness, and all
these things will be
given to you as well.”*

WHEN THE ORDER IS RIGHT

I'll never forget the excitement and nervousness I felt as a soon-to-be mom for the first time. My husband and I sat for hours on the floor of Barnes & Noble, flipping through baby name books, searching for the perfect name for our little girl. We dreamed about who she would become, what she would look like, her first words, etc. A life full of promise and purpose.

That season taught me something about alignment. As expectant parents, we wanted everything to be just right, not just the name, but the home, the nursery, the heart behind it all. We wanted to prepare, pray, and trust God with every detail of our families' lives. We wanted to get the order right!

Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 remind us of that same truth: when the order is right, the outcome takes care of itself. He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God." Not second, not when it's convenient, not after we've tried everything else first.

In a world where it's easy to chase after increase, success, or stability, Jesus reminds us that true increase begins with alignment. When we put God first in our decisions, our schedules, our families, and our prayers- everything else falls into place.

Looking back now, that tiny baby we prayed and planned for has grown into a beautiful young woman of God. And not long after, God blessed us again with our son- full of curiosity, joy, compassion, and a heart that's committed to following Jesus. Watching both of them grow into who God created them to be has been one of the greatest blessings of our lives. It's a living reminder that when we choose to seek God first and build our lives around His priorities, He takes care of what matters most.

The “Year of Increase” isn’t just about getting more. It’s about growing deeper. It’s about expanding our faith, maturing in our trust, and learning to depend on God before depending on ourselves. I’ve learned that increase doesn’t start with striving; it starts with seeking. Increase doesn’t come from what /can do; it comes from who I pursue.

When prayer becomes our first response rather than our last resort, everything shifts. It aligns our hearts with God’s will. It invites His presence to lead, His wisdom to guide, and His hand to bless.

So as we step into this new season, let’s make a fresh commitment to keep God in His rightful place first. When the order is right, the blessings will follow.

Reflection & Application:

1. **First Things First:** What area of your life have you been trying to manage in your own strength instead of seeking God first?
2. **Alignment Check:** What might it look like for you to bring that area back into alignment with God’s order?
3. **Prayer habit:** What could you do this week to make prayer your *first* response instead of your *last* option?
4. **Heart for Increase:** How is God inviting you to grow, not just in what you have, but in who you are?
5. **Faith in Action:** What’s one practical way you can live out “seek first the Kingdom” today in your home, your work, or your relationships?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for reminding me that true increase begins with You. Help me to keep my heart, my family,

and my priorities in the right order, seeking You first in all things. Teach me to trust Your timing and Your ways, knowing that when I'm aligned with You, everything else will fall into place. Bless my home, guide my steps, and let Your hand rest on everything I do. In Jesus name, amen.

-Pastor Michelle Balderas

Proverbs 11:24-25 NLT

*Give freely and
become more
wealthy; be stingy
and lose everything.
The generous will
prosper; those who
refresh others will
themselves be
refreshed.*

THE GOD OF INCREASE

Increase in the Kingdom of God is less about accumulation and more about release! It's the generous who experience the God-kind of increase and the hoarder who loses. I was living abroad as an exchange student in a foreign land and knew very few believers. The Americans I knew were interested in drinking all week. As a follower of Jesus, this had no allure for me, so I would go out alone. It was then that a wonderful believer, Cicci, befriended me. She invited me to tea and sought me out after church for coffee and conversation. Through her, I made wonderful friends and met new people. When holidays came, she invited me to her parents' home and made me feel like family. She taught me local traditions and fed me well! It was in this season that Proverbs 11:25 jumped off the page at me:

Proverbs 11:25

*The generous will prosper; those
who refresh others will themselves
be refreshed.*

That was Cicci! She had been so generous with her life, her time, her friends, and her family that I knew God would refresh her! He would take care of her because she had taken care of me, and He did in so many ways! He even used me! It was about six months later when I was back overseas, but not as a university student with financial aid, but as a private person with no finances! I had gotten on a plane in faith that God had called me. I had a one-way ticket and \$300 in my pocket. I had no idea how I would live for over 10 months on \$300. After a few days, the Holy Spirit told me to give the money to Cicci. All of it! Cicci needed exactly that amount to connect her internet. Having internet doesn't seem like a major need, but it was not about the need; it was

about obedience and walking in Kingdom principles. Proverbs 11:24 is about Kingdom increase:

Proverbs 11:24

Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything.

In obedience to God, who declares giving is getting, reaping comes through sowing, and above all, we can trust Him with our finances. I gave her the \$300, all of it. It would be the last American dollar I would see for the next year! And guess what? It was a year of increase! God poured out blessings and provision! Rent, food, tuition, clothing, coffee dates and meals out, travel, flights, hotels, tourism... all covered over the next year. Here's what I've seen and lived: the God of Heaven is interested in the lives of ordinary people. He provides every need and opens the windows of Heaven when we truly trust him with our finances! He is the God of increase!

Reflections & Application:

1. *When have you experienced the generosity of others? Reflect on how it made you feel.*
2. *When have you been truly generous with your life? Is this something you might work on?*
3. *How would you describe your financial habits on the generous-to-stingy spectrum?*
4. *Do you truly trust God with your increase, or are you hoarding to protect yourself and family?*
5. *Meditate on these two verses Proverbs 11:24-25 and ask the Holy Spirit what He would have you to do!*

- Pastor Theresa Aguilar

Revelation 21:7-8 (NASB)

*“He who overcomes
will inherit these
things, and I will be
his God, and he will
be My son. But for the
cowardly and
unbelieving and
abominable and
murderers and
immoral persons and
sorcerers and
idolaters and all liars,
their part will be in
the lake that burns
with fire and
brimstone, which is
the second death.”*

INCREASE IN COURAGE

I have always read this verse and wondered why God would list the cowardly as one of the groups of individuals who would not inherit the Kingdom of God. I felt it was harsh because, after all, many people are born shy, right. Or, is that just something we have learned to call it?

*The word *coward* describes “a person who lacks the courage to do or endure dangerous or unpleasant things.” But in the context of Scripture, being *cowardly* is more than simply feeling afraid, or being shy—it is allowing fear to rule our hearts to the point of denying our faith or refusing to stand for what is right.*

God has not called His people to live in fear. The Apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 1:7

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and a sound mind.”

To tolerate a spirit of intimidation or timidity is to live beneath our divine calling. We are meant to walk boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit—filled with His love and grounded in a sound, steadfast mind.

In these Last Days, courage is not optional—it’s essential. We must cultivate a spirit of boldness and train the next generation to stand firm in truth, love, and righteousness. To do this, we must understand who we are in Christ and know the authority we carry.

Reflections & Application:

1. *Daily disciplines – Boldness is developed in us as we spend intimate time with the Father, building ourselves up in your most holy faith and growing in assurance of His word.*
 - a. *How much time are you spending in prayer and reading your word? How consistent are you?*

- b. Keep your eyes fixed on Christ – Let his presence steady your heart.*
- 2. What areas in your life compete for your attention? Ask God how you can guard against them.*
 - a. Share the Good News – Open your mouth and declare the gospel with confidence.*
- 3. Who can you share the good news with today? Where is your area of influence? (i.e., family, neighbors, store, work)*
 - a. Meditate on this scripture throughout the week, declaring it over you and your family*
 - b. “And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.” — Ephesians 6:19 (NASB1995)*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come before you in repentance for tolerating a spirit of intimidation and for allowing insecurity to silence our voices. Reveal to us the roots of fear and unbelief in our hearts. Open our spiritual eyes and understanding, Lord, as your word declares.

We bind the spirit of fear in the mighty name of Jesus—fear, you have no power or place here! Fill us instead with boldness to proclaim your word and courage to endure whatever comes. Thank you, Lord, for your deliverance and for the power of your Spirit within us to do what you have called us to do. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

- Pastor Melissa Schultze

Luke 10:19 (NLT)

*“Look, I have given
you authority over all
the power of the
enemy.”*

INCREASE IN YOUR PRAYER LIFE

God wants us to grow in our prayer life. He wants us to put away all the negative influences around us and focus on where our answers truly come from. God wants us to succeed in all things, yet we are influenced by what we experience (whether it is religious tradition or our self-worth), and we have a hard time believing that, once we have made Jesus our Lord, we were given authority to stand our ground and expect our prayers to be answered.

Have you ever wrestled with a problem that seems to never go away, even though you tried every solution available and instead, it just seems to get worse?

This happened to Pharaoh in Exodus 8 when he refused to let the Israelites go, as God commanded through Moses. As a result, he awoke one morning to find his country swarming with frogs - Slimy, smelly, filthy frogs! Frogs were everywhere – in their beds, on their tables, in their ovens, in their bread dough, in their drinking water, in their hair, and other places you wouldn't even want to think about. Pharaoh had no control.

Then God sent Moses to ask him, "When do you want to be delivered from this plague? You set the time!" What was it Pharaoh said? "Do it tomorrow." Can you imagine that? That was such a stupid thing to say! Did he want to spend another night dealing with frogs in his bed, stepping on them as he walked through his palace? We certainly don't know the answer, but he could have ended it right then and there!

Perhaps he did it for the same reason that you want to wait until tomorrow to get saved, healed, delivered, or become prosperous. How long are you willing to let the persistent problem you are dealing with harass you? When are you going to get rid of your frogs? They will stay around as long as you let them. That is, until you

finally make a quality decision to put the Word of God in first place, take authority over the problem, and allow God to work.

My word for you today is: Don't be discouraged or give up! Even when you don't see the answer to your prayers manifested the way you think they should! Cast your care on Him! Let Him show you the authority you have as His child according to Luke 10:19

Reflections & Application:

1. *What problems have you been wrestling with?*
2. *Have you taken authority over them or just given in?*
3. *Are you ready to get rid of those frogs in your bed?*

-Pastor Mike Bryan

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

*“May the God of hope
fill you with all joy
and peace as you trust
in him, so that you
may overflow with
hope by the power of
the Holy Spirit.”*

INCREASE IN HOPE

Seasons change... there are times that may be filled with challenges, and some might feel more than the average. We may experience health challenges, emergency situations, loss of loved ones, and even storms we thought we were prepared for. We can understand what it means to have the wind taken out of our sails.

These seasons may have you feeling like you cannot find the words to pray, have a heavy heart with concerns, and feel hope is so far away. Our spirit longs to be with God, longs for His comfort and His strength. How can anyone turn this around? These situations can be permanent, no turning back. We need hope.

Maybe you find yourself in a good place, things are going well, and in the back of your mind, you just wish you could change some things. Do you know you are blessed and find yourself “hoping” for a change, a small shift, or a break through

Psalms 103:1-5 NLT reads:

“Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Each morning, no matter how you feel, begin to acknowledge that God is a good God, and begin to thank God for every good and perfect thing. The things you can see and the things you cannot. Place your hope in your Redeemer. Know that God is your everything; do not be frozen in concern or worry.

If we are feeling hopeless, we need to understand that hope is not wishful thinking; it is not an emotion. True

hope is anchored in Jesus. When the bible calls Him “the God of hope,” it reminds us that He is both our source and our sustainer of the hope we need—not just a little, but an overflow. God offers us an increase of hope; God desires for us to want an overflow of hope.

Romans 15:13 reminds us.

- *Trust in God*
- *Be filled with joy and peace*
- *Increase (overflow) in hope*

In a world often clouded with uncertainty, anxiety, and loss, it’s easy for us to lose hope, but the Lord doesn’t ask us to hope in ourselves or to make up hope. He promises to fill us with His hope as we trust in Him. And that’s not all, He desires for us to overflow with hope, like a fountain that never runs dry.

Reflection and Application:

1. *Ask yourself, where do you look for help? Do you put your confidence in what your circumstances say, the outcome, or timelines? Put your confidence in the unchanging God, the God who fills us with joy, peace, and anchors us with hope.*
2. *How do you increase hope? Trust in the God of hope. The Holy Spirit strengthens us in suffering, steadies us in waiting, and shines light in our darkness. No matter how uncertain things may appear, there is Hope in Jesus.*
3. *Increase your hope by placing your trust in God. Remind your heart that God will calm the storm, move any mountain, and meet every need. Your emotions will align with God’s Word as you speak it over your life and every situation.*

Prayer

Father,

You are the God of all hope, and I thank You for that. When I feel weary, discouraged, or unsure, remind me that hope is not far because You are near. Increase my trust in You, so that I may be filled with Your joy, peace, and hope. Let my life increase with hope by the power of Your Spirit, and may that hope point others back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

- Rev. Stephanie Moore

Colossians 1:10 (NIV)

*“So that you may live
a life worthy of the
Lord and please him
in every way: bearing
fruit in every good
work, growing in the
knowledge of God.”*

INCREASE IN FRUITFULNESS

The house I grew up in had a large yard, and my parents were both farmers' kids. That meant my childhood weekends were filled with early-morning weed-pulling and trips to local nurseries. The plants of choice were citrus trees: lemon, orange, grapefruit; you name it, we planted it.

Everyone enjoys eating fruit when it's on the table, but not as much the dirty hands and scratched arms that come with cultivating it, unless your perspective shifts to "enjoying the fruit of your labor." When you understand the value of the process, the harvest becomes that much sweeter.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, pens this prayer:

Colossians 1:10 (NIV)

"So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

There's so much we can take away from this passage, but let's focus on this: God's desire for our lives is that we would be fruitful. When we walk in His will, whatever we put our hands to will be blessed. God's blessing doesn't look like barely scraping by—it looks like overflow.

Scripture calls that abundance:

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)

"And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Let's go back to the fruit trees... If you've ever had one in your yard, you know that a fruitful season means you have enough for yourself and to share with everyone

else—your neighbors, coworkers, and friends. That's what true fruitfulness looks like: having enough to bless others. If you don't, you still know when it's harvest season because the breakroom at work is filled with ripe fruit.

The same goes for your spiritual fruitfulness. When you're filled with joy, the people around you can't help but be lifted by it. When you're full of the love of Christ, everyone you encounter becomes a recipient of that love.

So today, pray that God would make you fruitful in all that you do, and that He would increase your fruitfulness, so that you and everyone you encounter would become beneficiaries of His blessing flowing through you.

Reflections & Application:

1. Examine Your Fruit

“When we walk in His will, whatever we put our hands to will be blessed.”

- *What areas of your life currently show the fruit of God's blessing?*
- *Are there areas where you've been striving instead of abiding in Him?*

2. Share Your Overflow

“A fruitful season means you have enough for yourself and to bless others.”

- *Who around you can benefit from the “fruit” God has produced in your life—your time, encouragement, wisdom, or resources?*

3. Pray for Increase

“Pray that God would make you fruitful in all that you do, and increase your fruit.”

- *What would it look like for your life to move from enough to overflow?*
- *Ask God to expand your capacity to produce fruit that blesses others—spiritually, relationally, and practically.*

- Pastor Antonio Aguilar

John 2:5b (NKJV)

*“His mother said to
the servants, Do
whatever he tells
you.”*

FAITH THAT TRUSTS

One of the hardest seasons in life, or at least what feels like the longest, is the time between believing for a blessing and receiving the blessing.

We often overlook this when we read Scripture, because the Bible tells stories verse by verse, and it can seem like things happened instantly. But real life wasn't like that. Take the woman with the issue of blood in Matthew 9. Her miracle takes place in just two verses, but in reality, that was a 12-year battle. Twelve years of sickness. Twelve years of searching for answers. Twelve years of disappointment, until that moment when she reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment.

Her struggle led her to the Savior. And that's what often happens with us. The uphill battle, the waiting, the silence; it all leads us to reach for Jesus.

It's not easy to trust God in these moments — when you've prayed, believed, obeyed, and still haven't seen the breakthrough. But sometimes, faith looks like holding onto the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who said,

"Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5)

That kind of faith isn't contingent on results, but it depends on trust.

At the wedding in Cana, the need wasn't for water — it was for wine. Yet Jesus told the servants to fill the pots with water. The Bible doesn't tell us what they were thinking, but they likely questioned the method Jesus was using to solve the problem. Still, even with their uncertainty, Scripture says, "they filled them to the brim." They did everything they could with what Jesus told them to do, and that simple act of obedience opened the door for a miracle.

At what point did the water become wine? We don't know. But we do know that the servants simply obeyed. Jesus told them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast. "That's what He's saying to us today: Use what you have. Be wise, be faithful, and steward it well. Then place it all in Jesus' hands, and watch Him turn it into exactly what it needs to be. God doesn't need us to understand how everything will work out. He needs us to have faith in the One who already knows. All we need to do is listen to His voice, do what He says, trust Him completely, and let Him handle the results.

Reflections & Application:

- 1. Is there an area of your life right now where you're waiting for God to move? It might be a family member you've been praying for, or a child who's drifted away from the faith.*
- 2. Maybe you've been believing for a financial breakthrough, yet things still aren't unfolding the way you hoped. Maybe you've received a bad health report, and things don't look good right now. What would it look like to trust God's word even before you see the results?*

Prayer

Jesus, help me to trust You with all that I am. I'm sorry for the moments I've doubted you or tried to carry things on my own. Today, I lay it all at Your feet — my life, my marriage, my kids, my finances, and everything that weighs on my heart. I surrender it all to You, believing that You'll make a way even when I can't see one. Thank You for loving me, for never giving up on me, and for the blessings You've already prepared for me. I trust You, Jesus. I love you

- Pastor Terrence Williams

Matthew 6:31-34 (NLT)

“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God[a] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

INCREASE IN FAITH

When I think about how much time we all spend worrying, it's almost embarrassing. We know God has us and is our provider. We know He has a handle on everything that we need, yet we still worry. Worry is a thief, robbing us of the increase God wants to bring into our lives. Worry works off of fear. Fear is nothing more than...

F-false

E-evidence

A-pearing

R-eal

So, let's check our thoughts today. Pause and switch our thinking back into faith. Faith is believing in what we cannot see, knowing God is working it out. You may not know how he is doing this or what the detailed plan of it is, but He is on the move for your good. His plans are perfect, and His ways are your safety net; He brings increase to your mind, will, and emotions, so you can have rest and peace. Your heart is safe in His embrace as you wait on Him. When your heart and mind want to throw you into worry, stop, remind yourself to focus on God and all he has done and will do for you. It's the true art of resting in who He is. Remind yourself that he only wants what's good for you.

In Psalm 46:10, He says, "Be still, and know that I am God." In Jeremiah 29:11, He says he knows the plans He has for you, plans for good and not disaster, to give you a future and hope.

In Matthew 7:11 it says, "so if sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."

Reflections & Application:

1. *Read Matthew 6:25-34 then rest in the One who brings you all you need.*
2. *Combat worry in your mind.*
3. *Cast out fear from your presence.*
4. *Invite the power of God to move in your situation, and wait and watch what he does.*

Prayer

Jesus, according to Your Word, I will wait at your feet, for you are my redeemer. However, dark and long the night is, I receive your provision, and I commit to live in the inheritance of the Holy Spirit. So I cast out every foul Spirit of fear and worry that is trying to grip my heart, and I pray the blood of Jesus over my circumstance. Thank you for your protection, your provision, and your goodness in my life, Holy Spirit. You have given me the fullness of your purpose. You have redeemed my life. I will wait patiently, knowing you are my provider. Amen.

- Pastor Jessica Roth

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

INCREASE IN WORSHIP

Worship is not a song, it's not a church service, or the radio bumping during morning traffic. Worship is a lifestyle. Living for Christ, displaying His love and mercy, having a grateful heart and even trusting by faith that God said it, therefore He will do it. Complete and total surrender to Jesus our Messiah. Have you found yourself crying when you hear worship songs; raising your hands, closing your eyes, worshiping God, with a broken heart and empty worship? I have, and in these moments, I would pray, "God, heal my heart, fix the broken things, make right all the wrongs, God turn it around." We can find ourselves pleading our case.

God spoke to me during a church service: "Surrender all to Me." My response was a quick "Yes, God! I am surrendered to You." Again, I hear "Surrender all to Me." This time, the voice was one you would use with a child, as if to say, "I know the answer already; I need you to answer correctly."

John 4:23 NIV

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."

In true worship to God, we have to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, die to ourselves, die to worry, remove stressful thinking and habits, and stop trying to fix everything and everyone. Surrender it ALL. We need to change our perspective and look towards the Kingdom of Heaven, lift our hands and our hearts towards Heaven. Again, worship is a lifestyle, not an action.

We have to begin increasing our worship with a heart of gratitude, rooted in faith in God's character as a merciful, loving, kind, and forgiving God. We can understand the meaning of worship in truth as we give

up ourselves and become holy and pleasing to God. It requires us to get rid of anything that is not from God—stress, anger, frustration, doubt, unforgiveness, to name a few. God has gifts He wants to give freely.... Love, grace, strength, protection, joy, peace; and this list doesn't scratch the surface.

God gives us a brief glimpse of this in Revelation 4:8 NKJV.

“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

We see the most beautiful sight of worship and adoration in this verse. What we do not see is depression, sorrow, doubts, troubles; those things can not coexist in a place of holiness. True worship removes all ungodly and unholy things, freeing us to be 100% surrendered to God.

Exodus 23:25 NIV

“Worship the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.”

In worship, there is provision and healing. To think that we have all this available to us through worship, living fully for God! A life of worship requires that we lay our will, our ways, our desires, our thoughts at the altar. Replace these things with God's grace, His mercy, His love, joy, and forgiveness.

Worship is a gift from God that allows us to give back to God. Imagine giving a gift that is so precious and valuable to you, and then having that same gift bring you such joy. Wow! A gift that is that special, it changes everything—a gift you want to share with the universe. When we worship in truth, we give God glory.

True worship does not increase out of obligation, but from a grateful heart. A heart that is thankful for all that God has done. Worship increases when our hearts put their hope and trust in Jesus. Worship deepens as we move out of the way and allow God to move in us and through us. More of God and less of us. Increasing our worship decreases the worries of this world.

John 3:30 NKJV

He must increase, but I must decrease.

As we fall deeper in love with God, the deeper our relationship-a place of God's peace, seeing His power and love in all that is good. The issues of life begin to lose the power we give them, and the power of the Holy Spirit fills us with the living Word and breath of life.

Reflection and Application:

1. *Examine yourself: are there areas of stress, worry, frustration, doubt, or unforgiveness?*
2. *Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas that you need to "die" to.*
3. *Put everything that is not of God- (doubt, worry, frustration...) at the foot of the cross and walk in freedom.*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I stand amazed at Your powerful love and gentle mercy poured out for me through Jesus. Forgive me for limiting my worship to specific times or places. I offer my whole self to You today, my body, my mind, and my will, as a living sacrifice. Help me, Holy Spirit, to honor You in every moment, that my entire life may be my true and proper worship. Amen.

- Rev. Stephanie Moore

Romans 10:17 (ESV)

*“So faith comes from
hearing and hearing
through the word of
God.”*

YOUR FOCUS WILL DETERMINE YOUR FAITH

In life, we go through many seasons, some smooth and some rough. When we are in the rough seasons, we tend to focus on the challenges, hardships, hurts, and even ourselves. I know I've been at a place in my life where I was going through a rough season, and I put all my focus on the hardship. The consequence of that decision was a decrease in faith rather than an increase.

In this challenging season, my dad was diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma cancer. The doctors told us that the cancer was very aggressive and that it spread throughout his whole body. Based on the doctor's report, it wasn't looking good.

Immediately, I allowed fear to take hold of me, and I did this by focusing on the diagnosis and my own emotional hurt. This decision led to a loss of faith, leaving me even more broken.

There is an example in the Bible that I believe we can all learn from about the consequences of focusing solely on a bad situation. One evening, Jesus left His disciples alone to pray, but before He left, He instructed them to get into a boat and go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. That night, strong winds pushed against the boat, making it hard to sail. The disciples were already fearful because of the storm, but then they saw Jesus walking towards them on the water! At first, they assumed He was a ghost and grew even more fearful. Once they realized it was Jesus, Peter asked if he could walk to the Lord, and Jesus said, "Come". Peter stepped out of the boat onto the water, focusing on Jesus, and started walking towards Him. The moment Peter stopped focusing on Jesus and began focusing on the rough waters, his faith wavered, and he began to

sink. Jesus saved Peter from drowning and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Back to my story of my dad being diagnosed with cancer. Instead of focusing on the diagnosis and my emotions, I choose to focus on Jesus! My faith was increased as a result, and I am grateful to report that my dad is also 100% cancer-free! This year is a year of increase, and in order for our faith to increase, we have to intentionally focus not on the storms in our lives, but on the One who can save us from them. How do we do that? Romans 10:17 ESV says, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God." By reading the Bible daily and hearing from the Holy Spirit, we will focus on God. By doing this, the outcome will be increased faith!

Prayer:

Father, I thank you for being with me through every season and storm I have gone through, am in, and will go through. You said that in this world we will have trouble, but that we should take heart, because you have overcome the world. When I am going through hard times, and my faith seems to be waning, please remind me to look to you before anyone or anything else. Help me not to forget to seek you daily in your word and to spend time with you in prayer, knowing that through the hearing of your word, my faith will be increased!

In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen!

- Rev. Tim Paxson

1 Corinthians 3:6-7
NLT

*I planted the seed in
your hearts, and
Apollos watered it,
but it was God who
made it grow. It's not
important who does
the planting or who
does the watering.
What's important is
that God makes the
seed grow.*

THE FRUIT OF INCREASE

I'm sure you are familiar with the Coca-Cola and Mentos experiment by now. In this experiment, you can watch YouTube videos of a Mentos candy being placed inside a Coca-Cola bottle, creating an enormous explosion of foam. This chemical reaction is really a great illustration of what the fruit of increase can be in our lives.

Ever since I can remember entering into the ministry, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 has been one of my favorite verses. When we talk about increase, there's always an idea of more, but what I've come to learn is that the fruit of increase is always a two-part process.

For so many years, I became so focused on the fruit of the process of increase that I actually missed an essential part of the process itself.

Our founding Pastor used to say this: "I put the natural, and God puts in the super... and it becomes supernatural". And that is the idea behind increasing.

The Apostle Paul says, "I planted," meaning he put the seed of the Gospel in the hearts of people, and then "Apollos watered", meaning he was the one discipling people and continuing to bless and help them, but then He brings a phrase: "God made it grow." In other words, God gave the increase.

In this two-part process, to get the fruit of increase, there is a part you will play, and there's a part God will play. The question is, what part do I need to play so that God can bless it and increase it? Maybe you want a stronger spiritual life this year. But are you seeking God in a way that allows him to bless you? If you want to grow your company, you are trusting God with that growth. What is the part you have to do? Is it promotion, personnel, or perhaps a better management system? Whatever that may be, you have to do your part so that

God can grow your efforts. *The fruit of increase is the result of my efforts in line with God's blessings.*

So whatever endeavors you're trying to increase this year, the Apostle Paul is encouraging us to do our part and let God do the growing and the increasing because that's His part.

Reflections & Application:

1. **Think:** In which specific area am I desiring an increase this year (e.g., spiritual discipline, financial health, a particular relationship, professional skill)?
2. **Write down:** "your natural". What part can you do? What is the measurable, actionable "planting" step I commit to this week (e.g., dedicating 15 minutes to focused study, making three networking contacts, implementing a new management tool)?
3. **Pray:** How will I intentionally seek God regarding this area—not just for the result, but for wisdom on the process?
4. Start looking for those opportunities. How will I document and acknowledge the small signs of increase ("the fruit") as they appear?

Prayer Points:

- **Clarity** to define my part in the area of desired increase.
- **Diligence** to consistently "plant the seed" and "water it" without becoming weary.
- **Trust** to surrender the outcome and the timing to God. The growth is His alone.

- *Eyes to see the opportunities He provides for me to act upon*

- Pastor Paul Ogando

Matthew 14:31

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

INCREASE IN OVERCOMING OFFENSE

This Bible verse is very familiar to many Christians, but some simple truths can be overlooked when we just hear or read the story. I am going to draw out some of the truths I believe the Lord has shared with me, in hopes that they will also speak to you.

As we see in this scripture, Jesus asked the disciples to do something very familiar to them (cross to the other side of the lake). Understand that when faith is applied, it leads to something supernatural, for example, Peter walking on water. Even in your most familiar spaces, the storms of life can still hit. Has there ever been a time, even in these familiar spaces, when there was a testing of your faith?

In verse 28, Peter stepped out of the boat, and when he began to sink, Jesus grabbed him and told him, "you have so little faith!?" At that moment, Peter had a great opportunity to be offended when, in fact, he was the only one who had the faith enough to actually step out of the boat. It does not feel good to be rebuked or corrected, but we have to allow ourselves to be corrected to reach the full potential God has for us. Would you consider yourself to be highly offendable? Are you the type of person who does not step out of the boat, not because you are afraid of the wind and waves, but because you are afraid of being corrected?

After Jesus and Peter climbed back into the boat, the Bible explains that the disciples worshiped Jesus and truly exclaimed that He really is the Son of God. Because of one man's faith and obedience, something supernatural happened, and others came to believe in Jesus and worship Him.

Reflection and Application:

1. *What is familiar to you? No matter the season of life you are in, whether you are a student who*

attends school regularly, an employee who does the same thing every day, or a stay-at-home mom who has a daily routine, you can apply these thoughts to your day-to-day. Ask yourself, do you step out in faith and complete the task that God has called you to do?

2. *Do you consider yourself to be highly offendable? If so, take a moment to ask God to show you why. Reflect on the last time you were corrected and how it affected you. Do you still hold resentment or unforgiveness toward that person or shame and guilt toward yourself? Ask God right now to help you forgive that person or yourself.*
3. *In what area of your life is God asking you to step out of the boat in faith so that others can come to know and worship Jesus?*

Closing Prayer:

Father God, thank you for showing me, through your Word, some areas in my life where I can grow in faith. Help me to step out of the boat in faith to whatever you are calling me to. I ask that you remind me not to be afraid or discouraged, because I know you are with me wherever I go. Help me to not be offended when I am corrected. Send me, Lord, and use me so that others can come to know you and worship you. In Jesus' name, AMEN

- Pastor Mario Balderas

Matthew 6:34

*“Therefore, do not
worry about
tomorrow, for
tomorrow will worry
about its own things.
Sufficient for the day
is its own trouble.”*

INCREASE BRINGS ITS OWN GRACE

I remember when my first son, Ethan, was born. My husband, Paul, and I were so smitten and in love with this tiny baby! It was a love as we had never experienced before, and it filled our hearts to overflowing! We were crazy in love! We melted! A thought came to us both separately, and we were amazed to discover that we both thought it. The thought was that we felt sad that our subsequent children wouldn't receive the same level of love that we had for the first one. We would love them, but not with that same overwhelming euphoria we had with our first. When our second child was born, what a surprise we experienced! There was a new expansion of love in our hearts for this child! It was the same amount of love as the first one, but of course, slightly different since this baby was different in many ways! The same happened with our third, and as each one grew and their personalities developed, the complexity and depth of our love grew as well.

Now, as we look back, it seems silly that we thought we couldn't love each other with all our hearts, and in such an overwhelming way! Other parents have shared similar experiences.

In the same way, many times we doubt our capacity as the Lord births new things, new endeavors, new ministries, and new dreams. We can't imagine handling it all! But then, when it happens, and we discover new pockets of grace burst open for us, we look back and realize those doubts were just silly. The love flooded in... the finances came... the personal ability to manage new and bigger things arose ... the faith to maintain it and keep pressing forward was obtained.

What if there are entire reservoirs of provision just waiting for us? Resources, both tangible and intangible, are ready to pour out abundantly as we cross new

thresholds and expand in ways like never before. I like that term, “pockets of grace”. It reminds me that, even though I can’t see it or fathom it now, good things are ready to burst forth into our lives as we say “yes” to God- Yes, to the new thing he wants to do.

This is what Jesus was referring to when he said, “Don’t worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34), because those needs will be met when the day arrives. He wasn’t saying don’t plan; He was saying there is an abundance of some type of grace prepared to pour out to surprise us and bless us as the demands of growth arise. The key is the verse just before: Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

There are times we may need to ask. There are times we may need to pull on Heaven, or speak to the mountain or rebuke the enemy. Or declare those things that are not as though they were! But know there is a supply ready to flood into the situation, especially in response to obedience to a kingdom mandate.

Here at the Rock Church and World Outreach Center, our pastors speak a blessing over us at the end of every service. Almost always, the words from Deuteronomy 28:8 are used: “...and that everything that your hand touches to do, it will prosper!” It has been declared over you... Do you believe it? Just try, step out, and grasp something new; the Lord will prosper what your hand touches to do for His glory.

Prayer

Lord, thank you so much for working in my life so I can grow and fulfill my destiny. I know you use stretching and risk-taking to draw out new areas of maturity and growth in me, so help me to hear your voice every day as I study Your Word and spend time with you. Then I will keep a “yes” in my heart toward you, trusting you to help me as I step out into new things. Help me draw

from you each day a fresh infilling of peace and confidence to overcome challenges. Keep me close, don't let me get distracted. Fan the flame of passion in my heart to keep burning for you, to keep running for you. I confess, I depend totally on you! All the glory will go to you, God. I will give you all the credit and all the praise. In fact, I'll praise you even in disappointments and hard times, even before the breakthrough comes! To you be all the glory, Father. To you, Jesus, be the riches and honor, because you paid a high price so we could live like you did, doing the Father's will, and seeing lives changed with fruit that remains. I love you, Lord. Amen.

- Pastor Tracie Ogando

Psalm 16:8 (ESV)

*“I have set the Lord
always before me;
because He is at my
right hand, I shall not
be shaken.”*

SET THE LORD BEFORE YOU AND WATCH YOUR FAITH INCREASE

There are seasons when fear feels louder than faith. Moments when the future feels shaky. But Psalm 16:8 gives us a powerful posture: Set the Lord before you—purpose every day. Whatever you set before you will shape what grows within you.

*As we step into the “Year of Increase,” I believe God is calling us to increase one specific area: **our faith**. Not faith in circumstances, not faith in our own strength, but faith in the One who holds tomorrow.*

There was a season in my own life where I had to live this out. I became very sick, hospitalized, and faced fear and uncertainty head-on. After months of tests and questions, I was eventually given a diagnosis that was heavy and life-altering. I remember the stages of my faith during that time. My first response was, “Why me?” But the Holy Spirit gently shifted my perspective... “Why not you? This is an opportunity for God to be glorified.”

So I made a decision.

I set the Lord before me.

Not the diagnosis.

Not the fear.

Not the “what ifs.”

I activated my faith. I spoke God’s Word over myself. I received prayer and held onto the promise of healing even on days when I didn’t feel strong, even on days when the worry tried to come back louder than before. And from the moment I said “amen” to the day my clinician looked at me and said that, despite everything I had been told, I did not have Lupus... ten years had passed.

Ten years!

Ten years of choosing faith over fear.

Ten years of refusing to let worry steal my joy.

Ten years of God sustaining me until the testimony came.

And I can tell you with confidence:

The God you set before you become the God who carries you. God kept me, and He will keep you, too!

That is why the Word of God is essential. It anchors us, strengthens us, redirects us, and increases our faith. Joshua 1:8 tells us to meditate on it day and night because the Word keeps our eyes fixed on the Lord rather than on the storm. When the world shakes, His Word keeps us unshaken.

So if you find yourself wrestling with worry... set the Lord before you.

If fear is knocking... set the Lord before you.

If tomorrow feels uncertain... set the Lord before you.

And day by day, moment by moment, your faith will begin to increase. Just hold on!

There is hope, His name is JESUS!

Reflection and Application:

1. *What worry or fear tends to take your focus off God?*
2. *How can you intentionally “set the Lord before you” this week?*
3. *Where do you need your faith to increase in this new season?*
4. *What scripture can you meditate on daily to anchor your heart?*

Prayer:

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank You that You go before me and stand beside me. Today, I choose to set You before me in every area of my life. Increase my faith. Quiet every fear. Strengthen my heart with Your Word. Teach me to trust You in the waiting and to rest in Your presence even when the future feels uncertain. Lord, just as You carried me through past seasons, You will carry me through this one. Help me to fix my eyes on You, the Author and Finisher of my faith. I declare that I will not be shaken, because You are at my right hand. In Jesus' name, amen.

- Pastor Michelle Balderas

Luke 16:10 NLT

“If you are Faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in the little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.”

GODLY STEWARDSHIP

What has God given you to manage and oversee in your life? Finances, jobs, businesses, assets, relationships, talents, time, just to name a few. We can always want more and have better in our lives: more money, more resources, more friends, more time, gifts, and energy; a better marriage, better job, better business, better opportunities. Sometimes we ask God for all these things, but it's what you are doing with what you currently have that will affect your future and what God will bless you with in life. Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "If you are faithful in the little things, you will be faithful in the large ones. But if you are dishonest in the little things, you won't be honest with the greater responsibilities." God is watching our lives to see what we are doing with what He has already given us. He won't entrust us with more until we are trusted with the little things.

We need to have Godly stewardship in our lives so that we can receive the bigger and better that God has for us, the increase that you've been asking God for. So, what is Godly stewardship, and what does it look like in our lives?

Godly stewardship means having an obedient heart. Are you keeping God at the center of all you do? Trusting Him to guide you, and listening to His direction in every area of your life? Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT) says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take." I don't know about you, but managing everything in life can be overwhelming and difficult at times. But if you allow God to come walk with you through it, He will give you the wisdom you need to manage everything the right way with excellence in your life.

Godly stewardship means having integrity. Being honest, consistent, operating with Godly principles, incorruptible character, showing up on time, and being a person of your word are all ways to have integrity in your life. In one of my first jobs out of college, God told me, “Work hard at doing what’s right.” I took that to heart and applied it to every job I’ve had since then, as well as every area of my life. Not cutting corners, dotting every “i” and crossing every “t,” making the most of all my time and resources, getting understanding, and being the best me for my employer, my family, and for God every day. Colossians 3:23 says, “work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” I believe the Lord saw my willingness to work hard with a Godly character, and He entrusted me with open doors of opportunity: jobs and better jobs, promotions, raises and bonuses, and management positions throughout my career. He’s blessed me in every area of my life with an amazing wife, children, family, friends, house, church, and so much more than I could have ever dreamed or hoped for.

Godly stewardship means being generous. You can be generous in every area of your life: spiritually, physically, and financially. What are you doing with your time, gifts, and finances? Are you using them to serve God and others, or just consuming them all for yourself? Proverbs 3:9-10 says, “Honor the Lord with your wealth and the best part of everything you produce. Then He will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.” And in Luke 6:38, Jesus says, “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full-pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” God sees your generosity, and when you honor the Lord by giving back to Him and sharing with others. It shows God that

you trust Him as your provider, and He will cause you to increase and overflow in every area of your life!

Reflection and Application:

1. *Take some time to reflect on what God has given you and entrusted you to oversee in your life. Write it down on paper and make a list of what you think of.*
2. *What areas have you been obedient to God in your life? Are there any areas that you have not followed God or allowed him to be a part of? Ask God to reveal any areas that you have not been following Him.*
3. *Do you operate with integrity in all that you do? Have you been lazy, cut corners, or been inconsistent in any areas in your life? Ask God to show you how you can have integrity in the small things so that He can trust you with the greater things He has for you.*
4. *Have you been generous to God and others, giving back and sharing with what you have?*
5. *Think about your time, gifts, and energy. Where does it all go to? Has God been in your thoughts, or in great measure excluded from them? How can you include God, your spouse, your children, and others more in your life?*

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you have given me and entrusted me with. Help me to be a good steward over every area of my life. Teach me, train me, build me up, and encourage me to be all that I can be for you and others. Help me work hard to do what's

right in the little things so you can trust me with greater responsibilities. In Jesus' name. Amen.

- Adam Ewert

1 Thessalonians 3:12 NASB

*“ and may the Lord
cause you to increase
and abound in love
for one another, and
for all people, just as
we also do for you; ”*

INCREASING IN LOVE

In the book of Thessalonians, Paul the apostle is writing to the church of Thessalonica, and from the beginning he speaks of their faith, which is spoken of all over the world. Paul continues to tell the church how much he loves them, how much he desires to see them, and how he was willing to send them Timothy to strengthen them and encourage them in their faith. The church in Thessalonica was enduring persecution and yet continued in their faith.

I love the heart of Paul and Timothy. Although they, too, are dealing with persecution in Philippi and Athens, they are not focusing on themselves but on how they can encourage others to remain in faith. Here in the United States, we are beginning to see persecution like we haven't seen. Even though this country was built on freedom of worship, there are now laws being created to come against the church and to silence the church. We have even corporate America telling Christians that they can't talk about their faith, wear clothing about faith, or even put a nativity on their desk at Christmas. These kinds of things can very easily put us in a state of self-preservation. It can make us feel like we can no longer share the good news. Maybe even feel like, because we can get in trouble for sharing our faith, that the ends don't justify the means. But this couldn't be further from the truth!

I think about the persecution that is taking place all over the world. There are people dying for their faith and being imprisoned for their faith. And if we don't keep this in front of us, we can find ourselves like King Hezekiah, who said, At least it will be good while I am alive. We need to have a love for the body of Christ that wakes us up in the middle of the night, prompting us to pray. Remember, Paul said, that when I couldn't take it

any longer, I sent Timothy to check on you. And then he says, abound in love for people just as I did for you.

Reflection and Application:

1. *Read 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1-3 and ask God to reveal to you the heart of Paul in writing this letter.*
2. *Ask God, where can I start increasing in love? Can I start by asking God who He wants me to lift up in prayer, and begin praying daily for the persecuted church? Could I do an interest meeting for the upcoming Missions trips? Could I financially support someone who is in the mission field? Could I reach out to a local church that is struggling and ask how I can help?*
3. *Put an action plan together for how you will begin seeing this through, so it doesn't just become a thought or idea but a labor of love.*

- Pastor Bryan Schultze

Isaiah 9:7 ESV

Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

INCREASE TRUST IN A LIMITLESS GOD

There's a saying that when it rains, it pours. This often refers to when life becomes overwhelming, unsustainable problems, complex, double down to add stress to already disappointing circumstances.

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of a time when there were problems in Israel, and it was in a very bad spot. They were warned by men of God and found themselves very discouraged. This chapter begins by describing the devastation and darkness that the Assyrian invasion brought to the northern lands of Zebulun and Naphtali (Galilee), but then transitions to a prophecy of a future great light and a new king who will bring everlasting peace and joy.

God's goodness of grace when his people were overwhelmed by this great announcement of light in the middle of darkness for Israel, and they had trust in God for the provision of increase and to be ruled by God's peace. Doesn't that sound amazing? When life is overwhelming, and it's raining and pouring of depressing thoughts that may overwhelm you. That God's light shines out of your darkness, leading you to trust in a limitless God for increased peace. You could trust in God's divine government, which means a governed system not ruled by men, but God's self-sustaining governance gives you the capacity to double down on increased blessings for you. This covenant, keep God will establish you, and by justice and righteousness forever. So, lifting your eyes towards the heavens, where He will give you new levels of increasing not through our own strength, or our own power, but his rule and promise, his authority and zeal of the Lord's host.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for being the One who provides for me the increase of peace, justice, and righteousness that will establish me when things are overwhelming me. Teach me to rest in Your promise of increase that overflows with gratitude, faith, and generosity. Amen.

- Pastor Joel Alvarado

Psalm 115:13-15

NKJV

*“He will bless those
who fear the LORD,
both small and
great. May the LORD
give you increase
more and more, you
and your
children. May you be
blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and
earth.”*

INCREASE THROUGH FEARING THE LORD

This year for the Rock and World Outreach Center is a year of increase. Psalm 115:15 tells us how we can increase more and more, both you and your children. The psalmist says God will bless you with increase through fear of the LORD. Through fear of the LORD, He will give you increase.

I gave Christ all of my heart and all of my life when I was 15 years old, and my first question as a brand-new believer was, "What does it mean to fear the LORD?" I thought to myself, I do not fear the LORD, because I love Him. I love Him because He forgave me of all my sins and gave me assurance that I would go to heaven and have eternal life. Why should I fear Him? What does it mean to fear Him? So, I asked the college student who had prayed with me to receive Christ when I responded to the altar call. The student explained that to fear the LORD means to have a deep reverence for Him. To be in awe of Him.

If you fear the LORD, you will be blessed. If you are a parent, take this promise to the bank!!! God promises to bless your lineage and give you a legacy if you will truly fear the LORD. Mom and Dad, receive this promise today and rejoice in it!!!

Reflection and Application:

1. *Read Genesis 39:9b-10. Run from sin as Joseph did from Potiphar's temptress of a wife. She repeatedly, day after day told him to have a sexual relationship with her and Joseph told her, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day that he did not heed her, to*

lie with her or to be with her.” Running from sin demonstrates our fear of God.

2. *Read Proverbs 1:7 challenges us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” When we fear the LORD, we will spend time daily in His Word to receive God’s knowledge and wisdom. When we truly fear the LORD, we will desire to spend time with Him.*
3. *Read Psalm 119:10, this encourages each of us: “With my whole heart I have sought You; oh let me not wander from Your commandments!”*
4. *Remember to pray daily and cry out to the LORD you fear. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 reminds us: “Rejoice always, pray with ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

Prayer: “Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for this amazing promise with fearing You in this coming year, which will bring to us and our families blessings and increase. Thank You for an abundance of grace to run from sin, read Your Word, and cry out to You daily in prayer. In the mighty name of Jesus, the God of increase, Amen.”

- Dr. Rich Hall

*Romans 11:29
(NKJV)*

*“For the gifts and
callings of God are
irrevocable.”*

INCREASE IN YOUR MATURITY

Inside each of us are gifts and callings that need to come out. Most new believers are oblivious to what God is doing in their lives. As we endeavor to walk and stay close to the Lord, He will guide our steps and give us the opportunity to see what He's placed inside of us come out for the world to see.

We have books to write, songs to sing, businesses to start, and creative inventions to discover, yet we discount ourselves, buying the lie that we will never be successful in life. We need to let God show us our hidden potential. As we mature, He does. He'll open doors that train you to accomplish what He has placed inside you, yet so often we can't explain why God has placed you in certain circumstances or given you certain experiences and lessons. Even the most important men and women in history have said the same thing. In his book "Libro de las Profecias," the famous explorer Christopher Columbus looked back on his success in discovering the Americas. He wrote this toward the end of his life. Here are two quotes of how God had prepared him and ordered his steps:

"At a very early age, I began to sail upon the ocean. For more than forty years, I have sailed everywhere that people go. I prayed to the most merciful Lord about my heart's great desire. And He gave me the spirit and the intelligence for the task: seafaring, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, skill in drafting spherical maps and placing the cities, rivers, mountains, and ports correctly. I also studied cosmology, history, chronology, and philosophy."

Perhaps you have wondered why you are where you are. Why did you learn so much? Why did you work at the jobs you did? Why are you motivated the way you

are? I'm sure Columbus had those same questions. But draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8) "It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel His hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because he comforted me with rays of marvelous illumination from the Holy Scriptures... encouraging me continually to press forward, and without ceasing for a moment, they now encourage me to make haste."

My word for you today is: Don't give up! Press on to your maturity in Christ!

Reflection and Application:

1. *What gifting or motivation has God placed inside of you?*
2. *Have you asked God to give you a glimpse of how you will use that gifting?*
3. *Are you spending the necessary time alone with God, so you can sense the hand of the Holy Spirit upon your life?*

-Pastor Mike Bryan