

Day 1

January 27



Pray | Thank God that his desire is unity with you

The Bible says that “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” The Bible does not have a sin-o-meter, dubbing certain sins smaller or less worthy of judgment. Any time we sin, in thought or deed, we are missing the mark that God has for us—a mark of unity with him. And any sin, however “big” or “small” we may deem it, moves us away from the mark.

We like to play the “It’s really not THAT big of a deal” game to make ourselves feel better about our sins. Another dangerous game we like to play is judging someone else’s sins as “worse” than our own in the “At least I don’t do THAT” game. We also may tell ourselves we’ll work on that vice later, or perhaps we just really don’t want to give up some of our vices.

We can try to kid ourselves or stick our heads in the sand like an ostrich, avoiding working on our sins, but the reality is that they are still taking us away from the unity with God that he created us for.



Read | Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28; John 10:10; Romans 6:23



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

What areas of your life are missing the mark, keeping you from a closer walk with God? Pick one of these areas to home in on and deliberately work on. How will you get started? If you think you might be avoiding looking at where and how you are missing the mark, it may be too difficult right now to begin dealing with some of those sins. Please consider sitting alone with God and letting him open your eyes to some of the sins in your life that are preventing you from unity with him. Just accept them without judgment, knowing that there are others doing the same thing you are, and that God has abundant life for you. Then, one day soon, begin to let God help you work on those sins to bring you closer to him.

When do you play the “It’s really not THAT bad” game or the “Everyone else is doing it” game? Or when do you play the “At least I don’t do THAT” game? Write down why you tell yourself those things. How can you change the way you talk to yourself about your sins in order to be more spiritually productive? Maybe you want to replace one of them with scripture or with a counter argument like, “Yes, but I want to hit the mark more than I want to keep this vice.” What can you do?

Day 2

January 28



Pray | That God would be the point from which your thoughts flow

Yesterday we read that what goes on inside our heads and hearts holds just as much weight in our relationship with God as the sins we commit on the outside. The passage says that a person may be accountable to the authorities for their external behavior that may cause harm to others, but that thinking evil thoughts can have eternal punishment. Behavior is a symptom of the heart. Thinking evil, mean, or nasty thoughts may not always result in punishable external behavior; but in God's eyes, it still has consequences because it misses the mark. The KJV translation of Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his hearth, so is he." We must be mindful of our thoughts and how they are affecting us day to day and affecting our relationships with God and others.

Through Jesus, we put off the old way of behaving and thinking and put on a new self that is created to be like God.



Read | [Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28](#); [Ephesians 4:22-24](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

If you were to rate your thoughts over the past week on a scale from 1-5 with 1 being mostly negative and 5 being mostly positive, where would those thoughts lie? Why is that? Maybe you're at a rough patch in life and are surrounded by pain. Maybe life is stable and happy so you feel happy most days. But either way, are God's promises at the heart of your thinking? Pray today about how you can keep your thoughts fixed on him regardless of your circumstances.

Based on your number above, consider how you would respond differently to various stressors, duties, and relationships if the root of every thought was your relationship with Jesus and your trust in God's promises for you. How can you take another step toward putting God at the center of your thoughts?

Day 3

January 29



Pray | That God would continue to transform you

Changing behaviors sometimes seems easier than changing our hearts and minds. The longer we've been in a pattern of thinking, the harder it can be to change that pattern. We can impose rules and regulations all we want, but that is simply treating a symptom. So, how do we transform these long-held patterns of thought? There's no easy or quick answer. The Bible says we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. As we continue to get closer and closer to the mark through growing our walk with God, our minds become transformed to the mind of Christ. As we are transformed, our thoughts and habits become more and more like Christ's as a result, so we work at changing our thoughts less and less. It gets easier and easier and becomes more and more of who we are.



Read | Psalm 139:23-24; Romans 12:2



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

What is in your heart? Where do you need to invite God into your thoughts to clean them up? Spend some time today inviting God in to search your heart and see what thoughts need to be transformed by him.

How have you already been transformed by knowing God? Praise him for what he's already done and together with God pick an area you'd like him to transform next.

If you haven't yet invited God in to transform you, take a moment today to let him know that you'd like to receive what he has to offer and ask him to begin to transform you.

Day 4
January 30



Pray | That God would continue to reveal himself to you

In today's passage, Jesus uses some hyperbolic and slightly gruesome language to get his point across. He tells us that if one part of our body sins, we should cut it off rather than risk being thrown in hell for its sins. Of course, Jesus isn't being literal here, but he is using drastic language which tell us something. He's using drastic language because sin is serious business and needs to be dealt with drastically. Sin is what leads us to eternal separation from God in eternity; and on earth, sin is what clouds our view of God. It inhibits us from being able to see and hear him clearly; thus, inhibiting our ability to trust him; thus, causing us to step outside of his will for us; thus, causing us to sin...and the cycle continues. The more we sin, the further we are from God and his promises and fullness for us. We must grasp the gravity of sin and its effect on our physical existence and our eternal existence, and we must deal quickly and drastically with the sins in our lives so we can experience all the fullness God has for us.



Read | Matthew 5:29-30; John 10:10; Ephesians 1:17-20



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Ephesians says that God gives us wisdom and revelation so that we can know him better and experience the riches of being his children. Pray that God would continually reveal himself to you so you can experience all that he has for you.

What sins are getting in the way of you experiencing the fullness of all God has for you that you need to deal more drastically with? What can you do today to help you remember that all these sins are taking you further from the arms of Jesus?

When you think about the parts of your life you know you need to work on, how seriously do you feel those sins need to be addressed? Why? What would make God's fullness more valuable to you?

Day 5

January 31



Pray | For relationships that build you up

Since Adam and Eve, we have been in conflict with God. We see it throughout history and into today. God created us to be in a close and loving relationship with him, so the Bible says that he sent Jesus “while we were yet sinners.” While we were still angry towards him, while we were still pushing him away, he took drastic measures to do everything in his power to clear a path for reconciliation. A relationship with us is of utmost importance to him!

When he was on earth, God the Son prayed that we would all be one just like he and God the Father are one. He wants us to have the same relationship with each other that we have with him and that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have with each other. His desire is for us to all live in community with each other, loving each other and Him. Then, by our love, others will come to know the love of Christ. But we can't be a loving, unified community if there are divisions among us. It is essential to the gospel that we reconcile with each other and live in community with each other.



Read | [Matthew 5:21-24, 25-26](#); [John 13:35](#); [John 17:20-23](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Who (one person or a people group) do you believe God wants to reconcile you to, and what is stopping that reconciliation? Maybe it's a family member or friend. Or maybe it's a neighborhood, race, or political party. Commit to praying for that reconciliation daily for as long as it takes and ask God to work on you so that you are not a hindrance to his plan of reconciliation.

God went to extreme measures to reconcile us to him, sending Jesus and forgiving us even before we wanted reconciliation. Essentially, he tried really, really hard. Take some time to take a good, long look at how hard you've really worked at a relationship you know God wants to reconcile. How might you still be contributing to the brokenness of the relationship? What do you think God wants from you and how can you begin to move toward that today?

It's important for us to have a community of believers that we mirror God's love to others in. How can you strengthen your own community so that others can see God's love?

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