



DAY CHALLENGE

Welcome to 2019



We're so thrilled you're committing the first part of your year to developing yourself spiritually.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS CHALLENGE?

Every year, millions of people make promises to themselves and those they love to change for the better, yet they break those promises a few weeks (or sometimes days) later. We spend so much energy looking for our best life only to experience so much heartache when we don't find what we're looking for. Perhaps we're looking in the wrong place!

Jesus said in Mark 8:34–35 ESV, *“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”* Jesus is making a staggering and counterintuitive claim here. He’s saying that seeking your own best interest will never work. He’s saying you will never find the peace, the satisfaction, and the life you’re looking for, by looking for it! He’s saying the only way to find what you’re truly looking for is to find it in Him. Again in Matthew 6:33 ESV, Jesus makes a similar promise: *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Do you want 2019 to be the best year of your life? If so, commit to making it your best year spiritually. Make a decision, here and now, to seek Jesus with reckless abandon and watch as He begins to transform every area of your life! Trust me; I know from personal experience that there is no better investment you could make in yourself and in your family than to put God first in this way. That's why we can confidently say this will be the best year of your life, if it's your best year spiritually.

So over the first 21 days of 2019 we will provide devotional content on social media meant to guide you on a journey of pursuing God first. I encourage you to take this seriously. Put your heart into it, even if you don't see immediate results, and watch what God will do.

I leave you with the words of the great C.S. Lewis:

“Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.”

Tim Gross
LEAD PASTOR

WHAT IS THE 21 DAY CHALLENGE?

Evangel invites you to take on the **21 Day Challenge**— a focus on putting God first in our lives.

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

For 21 days, we will commit to communicating with God by praying on our own and together as a church family. To find out more about when and where you can join us for church-wide prayer, go to evangelcc.org.

21 DAYS OF DISCIPLINE

During this challenge, we will commit to growing closer to God through discipline in the form of fasting food or something else we use on a daily basis, so we can identify God as our true priority.

21 DAYS OF BIBLE STUDY

Along with prayer and fasting, we will commit to getting to know God better through a daily 15-minute devotional which will help us grow in the areas of our lives that matter most to Him.

21 DAYS OF DISCIPLINE

WHY WE FAST

The posture of fasting in its simplest form is about putting God first in our lives. In our fast-paced, ever-evolving world, it's important to take time to remind ourselves of our true priority. Closeness with God is the one and only thing that can bring us true peace, fulfillment, joy, and assurance.

Fasting is not always a comfortable journey for your physical body, but if you commit yourself to prioritizing God for the next 21 days, you'll find there's nothing better for the health of your spirit and your relationship with God than to intentionally put Him first.

“Come back to me and really mean it! Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins! Change your life, not just your clothes. Come back to God, your God. And here's why: God is kind and merciful. This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to cancel catastrophe.”

Joel 2:12–14 MSG

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command.”

Matthew 22:37–38 HCSB

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:2 NKJV

21 DAYS OF DISCIPLINE - CONT.

HOW WE FAST

You may be happy to know there is more than one kind of fast. Especially if you've never fasted before, **we advise you to consult your doctor** before taking on a complete fast or certain selective fasts. Here are four primary ways to fast:

COMPLETE FAST

This fast calls for drinking only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

SELECTIVE FAST

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you abstain from meat, sweets, and bread, only consuming water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

PARTIAL FAST

This fast is sometimes called the Jewish Fast and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 AM to 3:00 PM, or from sunrise to sunset.

SOUL FAST

This fast is common for those who do not have much experience fasting food, who have health issues that prevent them from fasting food, or who wish to refocus certain areas of their lives that are out of balance. For instance, some might select to abstain from using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast, carefully bringing that element back into their lives in an orderly fashion at the conclusion of the fast.

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

WHY WE PRAY

Every good relationship starts with the same key elements—love, trust, honesty, and communication—and the same concepts apply to our relationship with God. Prayer is all about connecting with God through a personal relationship with Him. God speaks to us through His Word, but He also wants us to talk back to Him.

It's through prayer that we express our love and thanks to Him, we ask Him for the things we need, or we just let Him know where we are struggling and need His help. God is never far away from you. In every little moment of every day, He is right beside you with His love fully focused on you—so just talk to Him.

HOW WE PRAY

At the end of each of the 21 days, we have provided some simple prayers for you to pray. We encourage you to continue praying beyond just the words we've given you as a starting point. You don't have to say or do anything that you wouldn't normally say or do when you're talking to someone—just be yourself! God wants to hear your honest prayers. Share your thoughts, your frustrations, what you're thankful for, what you need—He wants to hear it, so He can respond! God doesn't want polished, eloquent prayers; He just wants to hear from you. He wants to have your undivided focus as you speak to Him throughout your day. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16–17 ESV it says, *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God.”* Pray when you're getting ready in the morning, when you're on your way to work or school, as you're walking to your car or the next destination, when you're driving, and everywhere else. God is with you all of the time, so anytime is a great time for prayer!

21 DAYS OF BIBLE READING

WHY WE READ THE BIBLE

Have you ever made a promise to God and to yourself to start being good and read your Bible every day. After a few days you probably got bored, busy, or distracted and gave up.

The truth is, developing the habit of Bible reading is a hard thing for many Christians. We have our reasons: “It’s hard to read.” “I’m really busy.” “I get bored easily.” But I think it has more to do with our approach. See, sometimes we read the Bible like a self-help book. We’re hoping to get something out of it. We want to learn something. We want to find a nugget that will be meaningful to our lives. And we want all of this fast.

We like our information short and to the point because we’re busy! We’ve got jobs to do and goals to achieve! So our culture has conditioned us to look for wisdom and knowledge in little, bite-sized nuggets, and I think we bring this same approach to scripture. Other times, if we’re being honest, we read the Bible out of a sense of obligation. We feel like we should. We think God won’t be happy with us if we don’t read it, so out of guilt we go to God’s Word hoping to salve our conscience.

But here’s the problem. Both of these approaches put us at the center. The Bible becomes a means to our end. The Bible, then, is only as valuable as it is useful. In other words, if I don’t get something out of it, why would I read it? Exactly.

21 DAYS OF BIBLE READING - CONT

HOW WE READ THE BIBLE

So what if we changed our approach? What if instead of approaching the Bible to get something out of it, we approached it like a relationship? What if we read it simply to know more of who our God is?

Here are a few helpful tips for developing a different approach to reading Scripture each day:

- 1. Use a good Bible-reading plan and stick with it.** Don't always rely on your own judgement of what you should read because you'll just gravitate to the verses you like best! You want to get a BIG perspective of God.
- 2. Be okay with not getting anything out of it that day.** Do a husband and wife have breakthrough relational moments every day? Of course not! A healthy marriage is built on years of consistent face time.
- 3. Seek a relationship over an application.** Application isn't a bad thing, but if you seek to turn the Bible into an instruction manual for your life, you'll greatly minimize its value and purpose.