

Week One

The Power of Forty:
Enlarging Your Capacity

Day One

Transforming

It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad. —C.S. Lewis

True self! Transformed life! Authentically me! Full potential! Who wouldn't want each of these? But as C.S. Lewis so duly noted, you can't learn to fly by remaining an egg. That's what this 40-day journey is all about—helping you break out of your shell, spread your wings, and jump free from the confines of your nest. After all, if you don't hatch, sooner or later, life will start to feel pretty rotten.

Transformation is a miraculous process. We see it taking place all throughout nature. For some of us, it is how we know God is at work on the earth. Every time a seed planted gives forth a harvest, or a great oak emerges from a tiny acorn, or a tulip breaks free from a bulb, we see the miracle of creation at work. Wherever growth and transformation are not taking place, there is stagnation and death.

Life involves movement and change. Where there is energy, there is vibration. Light and sound—everything you see and hear—is comprised of waves of vibrating particles, constantly moving. The atmosphere around you is actually alive with motion. All of reality—or what you perceive as reality—is in constant flux. Your words, thoughts, and decisions impact the atmosphere, just as much as the atmosphere around you impacts what you think and say. There is a constant transaction—an interchange and exchange—of energy taking place at every level, from the solar activity that surrounds the earth to the subatomic particles that make up every living cell. Every breath you take, every bite you eat, every word you speak involves an energy exchange that results in transformation. You and I are simply walking, breathing transformers—energy conductors converting energy from one form into another. This is how energy is generated and ultimately how the process of creation takes place.

So it is when you exchange your old life for a new life in Christ. You become a new creation.

Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17 AMP).

And so the transformation begins. As soon as you are “born again”¹ by the Spirit of God, a new life begins—a new journey of discovering and becoming your truest, most authentic

self. Your divine self, created in God’s image, infused with His very nature (see 2 Pet. 1:4). You have been seeded with the life of Christ by God’s own Spirit, and as that life germinates within you, you become less of your former self and more of your divine, authentic self—you begin the metamorphosis of being changed from one degree of glory to another. As Paul wrote, you “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18 NKJV). The Message says it like this: “Our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.”

FULL EXPRESSION

The word glory connotes “the full expression of the potential of an object or person.” The glory of the sun is its heat and light. The glory of a flower is its fragrance and beauty. The glory of a human being is fully expressing our God-like nature, for, according to Saint Irenaeus, an early church father, “the glory of God is man fully alive”—which is exactly how you are being transformed, one step at a time, into the real, God-glorifying, you. Theologian NT Wright puts it this way:

As a believer, you are a shadow of your future self. There is a real you that is more you than you can even imagine; uniquely you that reflects Him. As you are indwelt by the Spirit, you do that more and more.²

From the time God started designing His creation, the number 40 has represented that transformational passage. Even the not-soglamorous caterpillar realizes he is intended for greater things. So he sheds his old life, struggles to a higher place, attaches himself to a leaf, and risks everything to spin a cocoon and wait. He has done his part; now he waits for the Creator of the universe to do His. Forty days later, it is time for the no-longer-a-caterpillar to experience his breakthrough, the promise of living to his full potential—a caterpillar’s true self—the magnificent, winged butterfly.

Sounds like such a safe and easy process to most people. But don’t miss the words “risk,” “his part,” and “wait.” Jesus told us in Matthew 6:15, “If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part.” Reverend Larry Gerber, Pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Church in Sun City, Arizona, gives us a reality check regarding what it means to risk and wait by describing the difficult but miraculous transition as follows:

A cocoon is where a caterpillar risks it all—where it enters total chaos, where it undergoes total rebuilding, where it dies to one way of locomotion and life and is born to a new way of living. A cocoon is where a caterpillar allows itself to disintegrate into a blob of gelatinous liquid without structure or identity so that it can emerge with sharpened sensory perceptions and breathtaking beauty.³

Interestingly, in biblical numerology, the number 40 relates to the period of probation before the fulfillment of a promise. It is the product of the factors four and ten, which represent “completion” and “divine order,” respectively. It seems fitting that 40 is also

the gestation period for a human. In 40 short weeks a microscopic seed planted in the womb transforms into a baby full of world-changing potential. But this new being must first let go of the safety of the womb by pushing through the confinement and darkness until at last emerging into the open and light. Like most humans being taken from their place of comfort, the infant does it kicking and screaming. Unlike the caterpillar, however, the destiny of each newborn child is known only to the Creator who shapes each uniquely by His Spirit, not only before birth but afterwards as well. The apostle John says:

When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit (John 3:6).

Giants of the faith like Noah, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus experienced God's transforming power of 40. Each was sustained for 40 days and then rewarded with supernatural manifestations of God. Noah was protected in the ark for 40 days while God cleansed the earth and then a covenant rainbow appeared. Moses fasted for 40 days and then God gave him the Ten Commandments. Elijah was miraculously sustained for 40 days before running for 40 more days with supernatural strength to Mount Horeb, where God appeared to him. Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days and nights; then, after resisting the enemy's temptations, He was visited by angels who supernaturally provided for His needs. He left that place of sacrifice and went out in the power of the Holy Spirit to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and raise the dead.

Submitting to the power of 40 is about cleansing, aligning, preparing, and loosing—four powerful concepts we will discuss throughout the remainder of the week.

This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man. — Shakespeare

Today, the first day of your journey to a more authentic life, begins with a focus on awareness. This is the first of 40 characteristics I have identified of someone who is living authentically—for how can you be truly yourself if you're not aware of who you truly are?

CHARACTERISTIC 1: AWARENESS

The soul is the seat of human reflective consciousness, passion, intelligence and acumen; housing the mind will and emotions. When God created the soul of humanity, our very soul gave us the awareness of self. We gained the ability to know ourselves not only as individuals, separate and apart from all other created entities, but also as social, compassionate, and spiritual beings with desires and emotions driven by a higher consciousness. We were given the ability to refer to the essence, character, and

personality of our souls as “myself” and others as “her-self” or “him-self.” Your soul gives you the ability of knowing, sensing, and responding.

The first step to living authentically is to be aware of who you are – the wonderful, intelligent, creative person God has made you; to grasp the fact that you are more than a body responding to your environment through your five physical senses. The second step is to be aware of the impact your thoughts, words, attitude, and behavior have upon others, the quality of your life, as well as the world in which you live—you are not an island. The third and final thing that you must be aware of is the unrealized potential for greatness that lies within you.

For now, I want you to simply focus on being more self-aware. Without cultivating self-awareness, nothing else you do will move you toward living more authentically. It is the first step you must take in making the adjustments necessary to correct the course of your life.

A.W. Tozer said, “Being has ceased to have much appeal for people, and doing engages almost everyone’s attention. Modern Christians lack symmetry. They know almost nothing about the inner life.” When you think about who you are, what does your internal dialogue tell you?

If you are to grow as a person, you must be aware of your internal dialogue—what your thoughts are telling you about who you are now and who you are capable of becoming. You must have an objective understanding of your own mindsets, habits, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses.

- Describe what you believe are some outstanding characteristics about yourself?

• How have you capitalized on those and harnessed the inherent power of you?

• What more can you do to maximize your unique set of gifts and minimize your own peculiar shortcomings?

Stop now to reflect and take responsibility for knowing yourself more completely. It was Socrates who so profoundly, yet simply, instructed, “Know thyself,” and it was Shakespeare who, inspired by Socrates, wrote, “To thine own self be true!”

Embrace your personal responsibility to discover your purpose, mission, and assignment in life. As Paul advised the Corinthians, “Examine your motives, test your heart” (1 Cor. 11:27).

As you set out on this journey toward discovering your divine, authentic self—uncovering those things that truly motivate and inspire you and bring you inexplicable peace and joy, casting aside those things which chastise your peace and grieve your spirit—I want you to prayerfully lean into the Spirit of God within yourself. Listen

carefully to what you hear God's Spirit saying—that still, small voice—and write down what you hear.

Use *The 40 Day Soul Fast Journal*, and answer the following 24 questions. (If you have not purchased one yet, find a notebook and designate it specifically to this 40-day adventure). If you don't know the answers, simply write down the questions and come back to them later. It is my prayer that by the end of the next 40 days, you will have a clearer understanding regarding the significance of who you truly are and why you are here at this particular point in history.

Ask yourself these 24 questions:

1. Who am I outside of the roles I play?
2. What are my long-term goals?
3. What should I be doing with my life right now?
4. What are my strengths?
5. What are my weaknesses?
6. What direction will my life go if I continue doing what I'm doing?
7. How can I be sure I am in the right place, doing the right thing?
8. What is my purpose?
9. Who should I be partnering with?
10. What resources are available for me to accomplish my goals?
11. Do I like the person I've become?
12. What do I really want to achieve in this lifetime?
13. What brings me my greatest joy?
14. What am I really passionate about?
15. What frustrates me most or makes me sad?
16. If I could do something other than what I am doing now, what would that be?
17. If I could live somewhere else, where would that be?
18. Do these things that I do and am involved with make me feel good and happy?
19. Are my relationships mutually beneficial and symbiotic?
20. Is there room for improvement in my relationships?
21. What have I accomplished so far with my life? Is it enough?
22. If I could do one thing different, what would it be?

23. After my death, will future generations know that I lived?

24. How do I want people to remember me?

When these questions keep you awake at night and make you listless during the day, set aside time to pray and journal your thoughts until you find the answers.

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time. —T. S. Eliot

God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are (Romans 8:15).

Day Two

Cleansing

All religions exhort man to cleanse the heart of malice, greed, hate, and anger. All religions hold out the gift of Grace as the prize for success in this cleaning process. —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Forty is a number of cleansing. In the time of Noah, God sent the rain for 40 days and nights in order to destroy that which was against His purposes. Gaining a greater capacity to acquire new wisdom, capitalize on opportunities, and maximize your potential requires getting rid of those things that are weighing you down and distracting you from your life's purpose. You need to get clear of whatever is obstructing your pathway to fulfilling your best destiny. This segment will help you eliminate the soul-killing clutter that is holding you back and keeping you from living a more abundant and authentic life.

If the stream of living water is going to flow unencumbered from the Source to you (see John 7:38), and then through you to the needy world around you, every hindrance to that flow must be eliminated. Any detours must be closed off that are preventing you from being clearly led of the Spirit. God's blessing on your life, your business, and your relationships begins with cleansing. In other words, clearing the airways in order to hear His voice more distinctly.

In Isaiah 58, God is very clear about wanting more than the self-deprivation exhibited by a sad face and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes. Here He gives you His list of purpose-busters that He wants you—and everyone else—to be free of:

Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of

wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:5-6 KJV)

Although the “bonds of wickedness” God is speaking of here refers to wrongdoing and sin, the definition also means more than simply breaking a set of rules. Think of sin as anything that keeps you from growing in Christ—keeps you from being transformed and changed from glory to glory—or anything that diminishes your true self. What are the things that cause you to stagnate or live in accordance with your former self that was “dead in trespasses and sins”—that cause you to live “in the past [when] you were dead because you sinned and fought against God” (Eph. 2:1 CEV). Remember, wherever there is stagnation, there is death.

God knows your heart; He created it. And He knows what will bring life to it.

Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I’m about; see for Yourself whether I’ve done anything wrong—then guide me on the road to eternal life (Psalm 139:23-24).

A PATH TO FREEDOM

When Isaiah spoke of undoing heavy burdens, he was talking about those things that dictate the direction your life moves in. The word suggests a yoke that was placed on a younger ox attaching it to an older ox, and thus the older ox determined the younger’s direction. Your negative thoughts can act like that yoke, making you believe that who you once were, where you have come from, or what people have said about you are the determining factors of your destiny. Nothing could be further from the truth. God wants to set you free from that kind of thinking during this 40-day fast.

When Isaiah spoke of letting the oppressed go free, he was talking about creating an environment of liberty—an atmosphere free from condemnation. Oppression is a reference to the crushing weight of powerlessness, guilt, and shame that can hold you down. Break free from

self-condemnation. Whatever shame is causing you to cower and be bowed under—to think less of yourself than you should—is a lie being whispered in your ear by the enemy of your soul. Jesus took care of it at the Cross. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ” (Rom. 8:1 KJV).

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy. Are you sabotaging your own success by the thoughts you think? Are you allowing those thoughts to interfere with how you manage your time? Or are you giving someone else permission to lay things on you that aren't yours to carry and don't further you toward your destiny? Are your past failures holding dominion over your future? Are relationships distracting you, or worse, crushing the life right out of you? By identifying those things that only you—with the help of the Holy Spirit—can pinpoint, you can begin to eliminate from your soul the toxins that keep you bound in negativity, unrest, confusion, fear, and despair.

Free yourself from heavy burdens! Break free from oppression! Cleanse your mind of the thoughts that weigh you down. Replace your toxic thoughts and polluted mindset with the light of the truth from the Word of God about who you really are in Christ—put on “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16 NKJV), for “whoever...[having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God]” (1 Pet. 4:1 AMP). Pray as David did: “May all my thoughts be pleasing to Him” (Ps. 104:34 NLT).

Our life is what our thoughts make it. —Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

As we move through day two of our 40-day soul fast, I want to talk to you about the second characteristic of an authentic person: Godliness. Godliness begins with the “God-likeness” of your thoughts—the thoughts that govern your mind. It begins by putting on the mind of Christ.

CHARACTERISTIC 2: GODLINESS

Fasting or abstinence is not an end in itself, but rather a door that is opened to us for the purpose of godly living. To me, godliness is

synonymous to Christ-likeness. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Scottish Professor, A.J. Gossip said:

You will not stroll into Christ-likeness with your hands in your pockets, shoving the door open with a careless shoulder. This is no hobby for one's leisure moments, taken up at intervals when we have nothing much to do, and put down and forgotten when our life grows full and interesting. It takes all one's strength, and all one's heart, and all one's mind, and all one's soul, given freely and recklessly and without restraint.

A gospel that is preached that makes no mention of godliness is not the true Gospel: "True godliness leaves the world convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the only explanation for you, is Jesus Christ to whose eternally unchanging and altogether adequate 'I AM!' your heart has learned to say with unshatterable faith, 'Thou art!'" said the great theologian, Major Ian Thomas.

Paul touches on the concept of godliness no less than nine times in his first letter to Timothy. He instructs Timothy to "exercise yourself toward godliness," and that "godliness is profitable for all things," adding that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 4:7,8; 6:6 NKJV). There is a kind of gospel being proclaimed today which conveniently accommodates itself to the spirit of the age and makes no demand for godliness.

Peter emphasized this characteristic as well. He wrote, "By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life" (2 Pet. 1:3 NLT). Then he spelled it out more plainly by detailing the seven things we must add to our faith in order to "abound and be fruitful" or "more productive and useful" (2 Pet. 1:8 NLT).

Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone (2 Peter 1:5-7 NLT).

It is godliness that provides the bridge between “patience” and “kindness”—it is what causes our virtue and knowledge and temperance to translate into the most God-like characteristic of all: love—for “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

I encourage you today to do a thorough study of the word godliness and meditate on all it implies. Then ask yourself where you are falling short of it. Eliminate those things that are not “adding to your faith” and supplement those key things Peter listed that will “have your life on a firm footing” (2 Pet. 1:10)!

This is ultimately the purpose of The 40 Day Soul Fast! To run a diagnostic on the life of your soul and purge whatever is keeping you from being more productive and useful. As Paul wrote to Titus:

We’re being shown how to turn our backs on a godless, indulgent life, and how to take on a God-filled, God-honoring life. This new life is starting right now, and is whetting our appetites for the glorious day when our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, appears. He offered Himself as a sacrifice to free us from a dark, rebellious life into this good, pure life, making us a people He can be proud of, energetic in goodness (Titus 2:12-14).

- In what areas are you living “a godless, indulgent life” and how can you—starting right now—begin living a more “Godfilled, God-honoring life?”

As Paul wrote the Corinthians, “Examine your motives, test your heart!” (1 Cor. 11:27). Make sure everything you say, do, think, and choose is lined up with who it is you truly want to be. Check your heart. Clean house by sweeping up any impure motives or stray intentions. Pay attention to how the things you harbor within your heart affect your words and behaviors—and equally important, how your words, habits, and behaviors affect the life of your soul.

It is my own firm belief that the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh. —Mohandas Gandhi

Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like Him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want (1 Peter 4:1).

Day Three

Aligning

Just as your car runs more smoothly and requires less energy to go faster and farther when the wheels are in perfect alignment, you perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, and values are in balance. —Brian Tracy

The number 40 is associated with repentance and realignment. God through Jonah gave the Ninevites 40 days to repent. The word repentance is often linked with sin, but the word is actually a life-giving word that refers to turning and going another, better way. It

refers to changing how you think and process information. God wants to give you a new context for living. He wants to change the pattern of your thinking by realigning your thought life. If your thinking is straight your life will be straight. How can you realign your life so that it reflects the authentic you God had in mind? You can meditate on the Word of God (see Josh. 1:8). Through study of the Word of God you renew your mind (see Rom. 12:1-2). When your mind is renewed, true life in Christ Jesus is restored. What a promise we find in

John when Jesus declared, “I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever” (John 6:35).

Coming into alignment with Christ is the only way to discover your true self. Letting someone else lead and giving up control may be a new adventure for you—but He promises the process is worthwhile.

Anyone who intends to come with Me has to let Me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow Me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, My way, to saving yourself, your true self. What

good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for? (Mark 8:34)

SAVING YOUR TRUE SELF

How do you keep from losing the real you in a world of distractions? The cultural forces pulling you to do or have more can cause you to lose sight of how to simply be. Learning to listen to your own voice, let alone the “still, small voice of God,” in the din and hubbub of life’s deafening cares and concerns can be an enormous challenge. Sometimes you just need to pull away, disconnect, or as Solomon told his beloved, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away” (Song of Sol. 2:10 NKJV).

Throughout the Bible, God caused His people to “come away.” He compelled prophets and patriarchs to pull away from society in order to learn how to listen to their heart and be led of His Spirit. Every great leader God raised up had a 40-day, or more often, a 40-year, “alignment period”—from Moses to David to Jesus. Undoubtedly Moses came under the power of 40 more than any other person in the Bible. After 40 years in Pharaoh’s house, Moses judged wrongly how to right what he saw happening in his sphere of influence. God then led him to the desert for 40 more years of paradigm shifting. After God empowered Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he spent 40 additional years trying to change the mindset of a nation.

Forty can also be seen as ten times four. Where ten is the number of law, and four is the number of the Earth, we see God bringing the things of the Earth back into divine alignment with His law. That’s what Jesus meant when He taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10 NKJV). These commands and principles are intended to give you forwarding power to become your true self—to cause the real you to come into alignment.

Your physical body is the holder of your potential and is the means used to advance you in God’s Kingdom. Try going somewhere without it! Do you need to change the way you treat it, bringing your physical and emotional health into alignment with God’s ways? Do you need to be more

intentional about practicing the Sabbath so you can enter into God's rest (see Heb. 4:6,10 NKJV) where "you will find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16; Matt. 11:29 NKJV)? Or do you simply need go to bed earlier so you get the physical rest you need? This is God's will concerning you! Your refreshment and rest is a priority to Him. He said, "I'll refresh tired bodies; I'll restore tired souls" (Jer. 31:25).

What about other areas that can get out of alignment and cause unrest? For example, are you operating your business according to God's principles? Are your marriage and other relationships lived according to His ways? Do you handle your finances in a way that allows God to bless you with more? If not, during this 40-day fast, repent and go a different way.

Be careless in your dress if you will, but keep a tidy soul. —Mark Twain

As we progress on our journey toward authenticity, we have talked about being more self-aware and about the importance of pursuing godliness. To help us do both more fully, we must be willing to take an honest look at our lives and be willing to seek the truth about who we are now versus who God calls us to be in Christ.

CHARACTERISTIC 3: TRUTH

Yesterday we explored the characteristic of godliness—or God-likeness—concluding that if "God is love," then loving like God is one way to practice being godlier. Yet the first thing Jesus told His disciples to do after He completed His earthly ministry was to wait on the Spirit of Truth, which He would send to help and empower them.

He'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can't take Him in because it doesn't have eyes to see Him, doesn't know what to look for (John 14:15).

Love and truth go hand in hand. "Your love and truth are all that keeps me together" (Ps. 40:11). "Guilt is banished through love and truth" (Prov. 16:6), and "Love and truth form a good leader; sound leadership is founded on loving integrity" (Prov. 20:28).

The foundational key to living authentically is truth. Not only being true to yourself, but living in the full light of the truth and being governed by the Spirit of Truth.

When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own but will tell you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future (John 16:13 NLT).

- Sit quietly with that Spirit today.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth about yourself—all the truth.

Ask Him to help you filter through what is not of the truth, to cut anything away from your heart or mind that is not true, and to help you cultivate those things that lead “to finding yourself, your true self” (Luke 9:23).

As the psalmist wrote, “What You’re after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life” (Ps. 51:6).

- What would this new, true life look like if it were conceived in you?

Remember, anyone daring to live authentically must first and foremost be honest with themselves and others. The worst of all deceptions is self-deception. Truth liberates the soul from self-deception. Always speak the truth. Exemplify truth. Uphold the truth. Stand on the truth. Live the truth!

Leaders of the future will have the courage to align with principles and go against the grain of old assumptions or paradigms. It takes tremendous courage and stamina to say, “I’m going to align my personal value system, my lifestyle, my direction, and my habits with timeless principles.” —Stephen Covey

You with open minds; truth-ready minds will see it at once. Prefer my life-disciplines over chasing after money, and Godknowledge over a lucrative career. For Wisdom is better than all the trappings of wealth; nothing you could wish for holds a candle to her (Proverbs 8:9-11).

Day Four

Preparing

Spectacular achievement is always preceded by spectacular preparation. —Robert H. Schuller

In Matthew 4, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert where He fasted and prayed for 40 days and nights. It was a time of preparation for the opposition that would follow, but also for the opportunities ahead of Him. Paul understood that combination as well. He wrote in First Corinthians 16:9, “A huge door of opportunity for good work has opened up here. (There is also mushrooming opposition.)” Cleansing and aligning your soul prepares you spiritually, emotionally, and mentally to bring the seed of purpose planted in you to complete fruition and to deal with the enemy’s plan to uproot it. But no small thinking!

Before God brought Adam on the scene, He had already prepared a life-giving place where he could not only live physically but also purposefully—the whole Earth! God is preparing you, but He is also preparing a place of purpose and abundance. He is getting ready to birth acts of faith through you; but again you must do your part:

Clear lots of ground for your tents! Make your tents large. Spread out! Think big! Use plenty of rope, drive the tent pegs deep. You’re going to need lots of elbow room for your growing family. You’re going to take over whole nations; you’re going to resettle abandoned cities. Don’t be afraid—you’re not going to be embarrassed. Don’t hold back—you’re not going to come up short (Isaiah 54:2-4).

Ask the Spirit to reveal to you those things that need to go so you have room for what’s coming. Cooperate with Heaven’s cultivation process. Do not settle for living a mediocre life characterized by limitations and restrictions. This 40 Day Soul Fast should not be viewed as one that is restricting you, but preparing you for greatness, power, and uncommon

success. Jesus embraced His time of preparation over a 40-day period too and passed His three tests in the desert by relying on Scripture and refusing to settle for anything less than His destiny. Rather than accept the glory offered by Satan, Jesus purposed to bring His Father glory by completing the path laid out for Him. Spend time meditating on God's Word during these 40 days so that when the opposition comes you can rebuke the enemy and cause him to flee by speaking God's Word.

Opportunity and prosperity are enviable outcomes of this soul fast. Many people today believe that godliness is equivalent to poverty, but the Word says, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2 NKJV). When you are willing to use your gifts and talents to your full potential, God will provide the place that maximizes them. He is also going to supernaturally provide unexpected opportunities and wonderful surprises. When reading the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, most people focus on the servant who did not produce a return on the talent he was given. But did you notice that his talent was unexpectedly given to the one who had produced the most return on his investment? It was not an opportunity he had worked to produce, but one that was unexpectedly presented by the Master.

When the Israelites stood before the Promised Land and God was ready to give it to them, they were asked to first spy out the land, which they did for 40 days. They brought out branches of grapes so large they had to be supported on poles between two men. It was obvious the opportunities there were great, but they chose to focus on the opposition instead of the opportunity. Ask God to give you new eyes to see opportunities and the mental, spiritual, and emotional preparation to overcome opposition.

Only a man who knows what it is like to be defeated can reach down to the bottom of his soul and come up with the extra ounce of power it takes to win. —Muhammad Ali

Preparation requires commitment. If you are reading this, you have already demonstrated this characteristic and are well on our way to living truer to your authentic self. Continue to cultivate commitment by sticking with this 40-day endeavor to the very end! It is this steadfast endurance that will strengthen and purify your soul like nothing else.

CHARACTERISTIC 4: COMMITMENT

Commitment liberates the mind. Commitment to your purpose, goals, or values will free your mind from cultural, political, and social entanglements so your soul is free to connect more deeply with one's true self and God.

Your flesh wants comfort and pleasure, but your soul and spirit desire growth and significance.

Your mind is always in contemplation of opposites and options: Should I eat home or dine out? Should I watch television or pray? Should I call in sick or get up and go to work? Should I stay up and finish my report or go to bed and finish it in the morning? We are all caught in a world of decisions, filled with fork-in-the-road experiences and options—critical moments in time when our values find their truest expression once that decision is made.

Commitment requires faith. You must not only have faith in God, but faith in the person who God has made you to be.

That faith will be tested along the way. The testing and trying of your faith, the refining of your intentions and resolve, the dedication, determination, and perseverance required to stick with something until you've obtained the desired outcome will empower and liberate you—and expand your capacity to do even more. Jesus told His disciples, “By your steadfastness and patient endurance you shall win the true life of your souls” (Luke 21:19 AMP).

- In light of “thinking bigger” as we discussed above, what would your life look like if you were to actually “win the true life of your soul?” Imagine it now.

You must be persistent and steadfast in pursuing that authentic, true life that God created you to experience in your present life here on the Earth. It's not a “done deal” when you receive Christ Jesus as your Lord. Paul wrote that you must “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). The Amplified Bible breaks it down further:

...Work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ) (Philippians 2:12 AMP).

You must continue to “believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39 NKJV). It takes commitment. You must be committed to doing whatever is necessary to save your true self. Jesus said:

Self-sacrifice is the way, My way, to saving yourself, **your true self**. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, **the real you**? What could you ever trade your soul for? (Mark 8:37)

- What are you going to commit to doing in order to save the
- real you?
-

Identify one thing you should purge from your life that is causing you to lose the real you.

List one thing you should practice every day that will help cultivate your truest self.

If you plan to live an authentic life, and to both become and do all that God has created you to be and do, it will take commitment. This 40 Day Soul Fast is designed to help you cultivate commitment so that you can cultivate your most true self. Don't cheat yourself out of experiencing life at its most abundant, prosperous level—stay committed to living authentically.

During this 40-day period you will encounter many obstacles and be tempted to abandon the daily disciplines. You may even reach the point of wanting to give up on believing in yourself or feel that there are other things preventing you from completing this wonderfully enriching and empowering experience.

Don't let small things keep you from your bigger self! I ask my audiences everywhere I go, “What is the one thing you can change that will change everything?” You will be surprised at what a difference one small adjustment can make in your life—a minor thing that can keep you from

or move you toward major success. Sometimes it's just a matter of being consistent and staying with it—as Jesus told His disciples, “Staying with it—that’s what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry” (Luke 21:19).

Lack of commitment could be the only thing standing between you and what you really want.

A little more persistence, a little more effort, and what seemed hopeless failure may turn to glorious success. —Elbert Hubbard

Your heart's been in the right place all along. You've got what it takes to finish it up, so go to it. Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't. The heart regulates the hands (2 Corinthians 8:10).

Day Five

Loosing

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. —Martin Luther King, Jr.

At the end of this 40 Day Soul Fast, God is going to send a new you out into a new place. Not just the same old you with a few addons. That would be like hot-gluing a pair of wings on a caterpillar! For you to make the metamorphosis into a beautiful, winged butterfly capable of taking flight, you will have to develop extraordinary faith and patience. This is why cultivating the life of your soul is so very important—and why these are among the key strengths 40 carries the power to help you accomplish.

The number 40 can be expressed as five times eight; eight represents new beginnings and five is the number of grace. Forty empowers you with the grace you need to step out and take firm hold of your future. It will expand your capacity to see beyond your present limitations and to focus on the promise of future possibilities. Your divine self has a divine destiny orchestrated by God. He has called and anointed you to step forward, to “be strong and courageous” (Josh. 1:9 NIV) and take possession of all He has prepared for you. Paul told the Ephesians:

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine (make day dawn) upon you and give you light (Ephesians 5:14 AMP).

In other words, you need to wake up and see the light about who God has called you to be in Christ. The greatness He has seeded in you with His own Spirit—the power you wield because of that Spirit working in and through you. Don't be like a walking dead person—wake up from the coma you're in and start living and impacting the world around you. It might not feel like it because you're not yet fully awake—perhaps you're still drowsy from disappointments and distractions—but you are destined for greatness.

Champions like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and David were all destiny-minded—they saw past their situations and limitations to what was possible with God’s grace and anointing. You, too, must choose to focus on your potential in Christ rather than your position on Earth and march aggressively on toward the destiny God has called you to. Don’t be like others who God anointed and blessed, but who refused to be loosed.

The Bible uses the word loosed throughout both the Old and New Testaments to indicate someone who has been set free from their former life and sent out, so to speak, to accomplish an ordained mission or goal. In the case of Ephraim, however, we read about a situation where there was a refusal to move out when the time came: “When birth pangs signaled it was time to be born, Ephraim was too stupid to come out of the womb. When the passage into life opened up, he didn’t show” (Hos. 13:13). Instead, when the time is fulfilled and the due date comes, we need to pursue God’s leading through prayer as David did and allow Him to lead us to a glorious destiny.

Noah, who endured the 40 days and nights of rain, was launched into a fresh new start with God’s blessing and His command to lavish life on the Earth. At the end of Jesus’ 40 days in the desert He was loosed to return to Galilee, where news spread quickly of His exploits.

From there He went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God’s kingdom was His theme—that beginning right now they were under God’s government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with an ailment, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all (Matthew 4:23-24).

God’s blessing on your life can’t be hidden; He sets you on a lamp stand to expel the darkness in this world where you were created, gifted, and anointed to make a difference. That’s the amazing picture we see painted by the prophet Zechariah as he told of a time when other nations would see the blessing of God on His people:

The leaders will confer with one another: “Shouldn’t we try to get in on this? Get in on God’s blessings? Pray to God of the Angel-Armies? What’s keeping us? Let’s go!” Lots of people, powerful nations—they’ll come to Jerusalem looking for what they can get from God of the Angel-Armies, looking to get a blessing from God. A Message from God of the Angel-Armies: “At that time, ten men speaking a variety of languages will grab the sleeve of one Jew, hold tight, and say, ‘Let us go with you. We’ve heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:21-23).

Don’t draw back when destiny calls. Take firm hold of what God has called you to do in faith. Believe what God says about you, and determine in your heart to be among those whom people will grab onto saying, “Let us go with you. We’ve heard that God is with you.”

Ordinary riches can be stolen; real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you. — Oscar Wilde

Yesterday we talked about commitment. Once you’ve committed to an endeavor, you will need patience to see it through to completion.

CHARACTERISTIC 5: PATIENCE

Patience will refine and perfect you. Patience is a discipline you must practice if you want to break free from the myriad of things that can plague and pollute your soul! Impatience will cause you all sorts of emotional and relational problems, such as losing your temper and saying things you will later regret; becoming agitated, anxious, stressed, frustrated, angry, flustered, and so on. Without patience, you won’t be able to cultivate other important characteristics, such as self-control, compassion, faithfulness, mercy, and love. Impatience will cause you to get out of step with the Spirit of God, whose lead you are to closely follow.

I came across a compelling story that demonstrates the value and power of patience. This story is about a very unique plant, the Chinese bamboo. When bamboo is planted, watered, and nurtured throughout the growing season, it does not outwardly develop at all—not a bud or sprout appears. It takes

five consecutive years of cultivation before even the slightest sign of growth is visible. And then in the fifth year, something incredible happens: Within a six-week period it grows up to 60 feet!

For five years, the bamboo seed silently develops underground—expanding its root system in order to make it strong enough to sustain the “sudden growth” that ultimately takes place in the fifth year. Had the tree failed to build a strong underground foundation, it would be impossible for it to “all of a sudden” reach its full potential when it comes time to push its way through the soil into the outside world.

This story illustrates the vital importance of patience in developing the character necessary to persevere and “push through.” Like the bamboo, living true to your self and greatest potential takes patience and perseverance. People may not immediately see growth, but with the help of God, you will emerge as the great soul and admirable person you were created to be.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, “The heights by great men, reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight. But they, while their companions slept, toiled ever upward through the night.”

Growth is a process and does not happen overnight. You must be steadfast and unshakeable in your faith. Former president of the Philippines Corazon Aquino said, “Faith is not simply a patience that passively suffers until the storm is past. Rather, it is a spirit that bears things - with resignations, yes, but above all, with blazing, serene hope.”

Whatever you are believing God for, continue to trust, pray, and wait. Time is never wasted when you wait upon the Lord. As Paul wrote the Romans, “We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don’t see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become” (Romans 8:25). And as James encouraged his readers, “Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4 NKJV).

Jesus said that it is only by exercising patience that you will learn to “possess your soul” (Luke 21:19 NKJV). As you draw closer to your authentic self, you must learn to take possession of your soul by mastering

the discipline of patience. Stop, breathe, count to ten, do whatever you need to!

- What typically causes you to lose your patience?
- How can you change your perspective to tap into the power of patience?

Visualize yourself exercising patient restraint the next time you want to react otherwise.

According to Galatians 5, patience is a fruit of the Spirit that you can cultivate simply by spending time in the presence of God—or rather, by letting the presence of God spend time in you, for it is “the work which His presence within accomplishes!” (Gal. 5:22 AMP).

Developing patience is key to growing into your authentic self and fulfilling your best destiny: “For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God” (Heb. 10:36 AMP).

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. —Henry David Thoreau

We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next (Romans 5:3-4).