

United Institutional Baptist Church
"FOLLOWING THE KINGDOM AGENDA"

"THY KINGDOM COME THY WILL BE DONE ON
EARTH AS IN HEAVEN" LUKE 11:2

Our Father

Hallowed be Thy name

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done...

Amen

Luke 11:2

January 8th – February 16th, 2024

UNITED INSTITUTIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH

40 DAY FAST

6:00AM - 6:00PM MONDAY - FRIDAY
JANUARY 8TH - FEBRUARY 16TH, 2024

THEME:

FOLLOWING THE KINGDOM AGENDA (LUKE 11:2)

"Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done On Earth As In Heaven"



**Information contained in this document is from the book
"Life Under God: The Kingdom Agenda"
by Tony Evans*

JANUARY 8: THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

The heart of our problem in our nation today—in our lives, families, churches, and communities—can be captured and summarized in these verses found in 2 Chronicles 15, a portion of God’s Word talking about ancient Israel:

For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. . . . In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress. (vv. 3, 5–6)

The first thing missing was “the true God.”

The Israelites had not become atheists. Nor was their attendance at the temple down. The sacrificial fires continued to burn. Yet despite all of their religious activity, Israel had lost a correct view of the true God.

They wanted a convenient God, one they could control. They wanted a kingdom without a King. They wanted a figurehead, a puppet with the trappings of kingship only. Yet any god or king you can boss around isn’t the true God, or the true King. The true God does not adjust to you. You adjust to Him.

Our culture doesn’t want the true God either. Our culture wants to pay homage only—to offer a nice little prayer before public meetings.

Yet any time we simply pay homage without aligning our thoughts and actions under God, we are reinforcing our culture’s false view of God as a harmless deity who doesn’t have anything significant to say about the educational, scientific, entertainment, civic, political, familial, legal, or racial issues of the day. Doing so, we seek to leave God the title of King in name only, but give His powers and authority to others, or even ourselves.

REFLECTION: What is the difference between paying homage and true worship? In what areas of your life do you treat God as a figurehead king and not your true Lord? How can we align our thoughts and actions under God?

*Lord, may I never want a kingdom without You as the King.
Grant me the wisdom and ability to seek You in everything
that I do and to live a life reflective of Your kingdom agenda.*

JANUARY 9: THE STANDARD OF TRUTH

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

We often complain about what unbelievers do. And in 2 Chronicles 15, we see that the Israelites did not seek the true God. That was their first problem, and it is our problem in our nation as well. The second problem Israel faced, which led to their decay, was a lack of teaching priests. Again, the text doesn't say there were no priests at all. But the priests had stopped teaching the truth. They had traded enlightenment for entertainment. Worship had degenerated into a social club. The church was no longer the epicenter of all life and conscience of the culture, calling people to take God seriously.

Israel was suffering from an absence of spiritual leaders who took seriously the authority of Scripture for all of life. Too often today, pastors preach to please. They fear that someone might say, "Well, I didn't like that sermon." But if the pastor preached God's Word, that's the wrong response. The issue is whether it was true, not whether it was popular. Politicians need to be popular. Preachers need to tell the truth.

The issue of truth is all-important. The lack of truth leads to a "conscienceless" society. People become anesthetized in their conscience, losing their sense of right and wrong. In such a society every person becomes a law unto himself or herself, so chaos rules.

Yet in a world where everybody's truth is true and everyone's answers are right, nobody's truth is true and no one's answers end up being right. When a society loses truth, it loses meaning, because people are never really sure about anything.

There's only one standard of truth: the changeless word of the one, true God.

REFLECTION: What alternate standards of truth vie for your attention? Why is God's Word important to the Christian life? How can we keep our hearts focused on the truth of God's Word?

All truth comes from You, Lord. Your Word is the standard by which all is to be measured. I praise You and thank You for Your Word and for the ability You have given each of us to know You and to understand Your teaching.

JANUARY 10: BAD INFORMATION

*... rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation,
devoted to prayer ... (Romans 12:12)*

When you look at the news from your community or your nation, would you describe it as chaotic or peaceful?

The third missing ingredient in Israel was God's law. When a culture has a false view of God built on bad information, God begins to remove the restraint of His law, and evil grows unbridled. What you and I are witnessing today in the rapid worsening of our culture is the reality that God is removing more and more of His restraint.

Even sinners who respect God won't do certain things. But once God is removed from or marginalized in a culture, then the standard for a society is gone and God becomes one's worst enemy and worst nightmare. That's what had happened in Israel.

When the rule of God's law is missing, chaos replaces community. You cannot have order and structure in society without God. Men become enslaved by the very freedom they seek.

We have ungodly people in our culture who don't want any divine standard to which they must be held accountable. But when God leaves a society, hope goes with Him.

As long as you have God, you have hope. He's the one thing you can count on. If God is still in the picture, and as long as His agenda is still on the table, it's not over until it's over.

Even if circumstances collapse, God will keep you. As long as God is front and center in a culture, life, family, or church, there's hope. But when He is removed, just like when people and their taxes leave the inner city and go to the suburbs, God goes to the spiritual suburbs, and the inner city's cultures crumble.

REFLECTION: How does a false view of God harm an individual? How does it harm a community or a culture? In what areas has our own culture gone astray from God's Word? How has my family followed culture instead of God's way—and how can we correct that?

*Heavenly Father, help me to always keep You front and center in my life.
And I also pray that You will help the believers in this nation to do
the same as well. Remind us of Your preeminence over all.*

JANUARY 11: GOD'S AGENDA

And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade. (Mark 4:30–32)

When you look around you, it seems like everyone has an agenda. People have plans, programs, things they want to accomplish, and specific ways they want to accomplish them. They make lists, set goals, and try to reach them. Maybe you've got your own agenda as well.

God is no stranger to agendas. In fact, He has an agenda, too; something He wants to accomplish in His way. Scripture calls this agenda God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is the alternative to the kingdom of this world. An "alternative" simply means that it is another way; there is another idea on the table. As God's people, we are not limited by the choices this world offers us. God has an alternative plan for us—called His kingdom agenda.

In the same way that our culture and our country want us to be regularly reminded about our citizenship in this kingdom called America, there is another kingdom—a greater and more perfect kingdom—of which we are a part. It is the kingdom of God.

REFLECTION: What are the three most important items on your life agenda? What do these agenda items say about your life priorities? What place do kingdom values have in your priorities?

Father, reveal to me the majesty and magnitude of Your kingdom, of which I am a part. Cause me to know both my place and position, and use me within it for the good of others and Your glory.

JANUARY 12: YOUR BIRTHPLACE

And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." (Luke 8:10)

If you are an American, you are most likely an American because you were born here. Likewise, if you are a part of the kingdom of God, it is because you have been born again into His kingdom. This foundational truth not only affects you greatly, but it is also the key to grasping the truths of the Bible.

The unifying central theme throughout the Bible is the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. The conjoining thread from Genesis to Revelation—from beginning to end—is focused on one thing: God's glory through advancing God's kingdom.

When you do not focus on that theme, the Bible presents itself as disconnected stories that may be great for inspiration but seem to be unrelated in purpose and direction. The Bible exists to share God's movement in history toward the establishment and expansion of His kingdom. It highlights the connectivity throughout, which is the kingdom. Understanding this principle increases the relevance of this several-thousand-year-old manuscript to your everyday life, because the kingdom is not only then, it is now.

REFLECTION: How does understanding the Bible's theme help us read it? If you were to summarize the Bible's theme briefly, how would you describe it? How is it comforting to know the Bible isn't really about us, but about God?

Father, open my eyes to see Your Word in light of the purposes and stories of Your kingdom. Show me the connections throughout Scripture and reveal to me the unifying heartbeat of Your own heartbeat, which is Your kingdom.

JANUARY 13: GOD'S ALL-INCLUSIVE KINGDOM

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13–14)

The kingdom of God is His rule, His plan, His program. It is all-embracing, covering everything in the universe. We can define the kingdom as *God's comprehensive rule over all creation.*

If God's kingdom is comprehensive, so is His kingdom agenda. The kingdom agenda may be defined as *the visible demonstration of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life.*

The Greek word Scripture uses for kingdom is *basileia*. This means a "rule" or "authority." It includes the concept of power. So when we talk about a kingdom, we're talking first about a king or a ruler.

Now if there is a ruler, there also have to be "rulees," or kingdom subjects (Colossians 1:13). In addition, a kingdom includes a realm—that is, a domain over which the king rules. Finally, if you're going to have a ruler, rulees, and a realm, you also need kingdom regulations: guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects. These are necessary so that the rulees will know whether they are doing what the ruler wants done.

God's kingdom includes all of these elements. He is the absolute Ruler of His domain, which encompasses all of creation. Likewise, His authority is total. Everything God rules, He runs.

REFLECTION: How do you react to the statement that God's rule is "comprehensive . . . over every area of life"? What areas are hard for you to submit to God's authority? How does your submission to God's authority allow you to function as you were created to function?

Father, I recognize and honor You as King and Ruler. Not only over all of Your creation, but over me. I exalt Your name as the one true King—knowing You are ultimately in charge of all things. Help me to walk according to Your rules and regulations because these will guard my life.

JANUARY 14: KINGDOM MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20–21)

One of the problems facing modern Christianity today is that we have not properly defined God's kingdom. Some people secularize and politicize the kingdom. They try to look for the solutions to life's problems solely in our government systems or societal infrastructures. They believe that political involvement or social action will by itself usher in the kingdom.

While there is nothing wrong with entering the political arena as a believer in Jesus Christ—in fact it ought to be encouraged—we need to bear in mind that God's kingdom is not comprised of, nor limited to, a political institution of mankind. God transcends political parties. He sides with His own agenda.

Other Christians, though, often over-spiritualize the kingdom. In contrast to their politically active brothers and sisters, these are the individuals who are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. They live with their heads and hearts in the upper levels of the ionosphere while the kingdom of God never moves beyond the esoteric belief system within them.

God's kingdom agenda is much bigger than the political and social realm; neither is it limited to the walls of the church. It is best positioned to reach outwardly from each individual while simultaneously directing the circumference of one's life.

REFLECTION: Where have you confused or blurred the lines between God's kingdom and political activity? Have earthly politics become too important for you—or have you avoided your Christian citizenship responsibilities? How can you interact with political realities as a Christian?

Lord, may I not be so heavenly minded that I am no earthly good. May I likewise not seek to replace Your power, authority, and governance with solutions sought from the political or social realm that come apart from You. Rather, may my life fully reflect and radiate forth Your precepts and purposes through each and every realm.

JANUARY 15: ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. (John 10:10 THE MESSAGE)

Trusting Jesus Christ for your salvation will get you to heaven. But trusting Jesus Christ for your salvation doesn't automatically get heaven, and its subsequent power, authority, and blessings, to come down to you.

Getting into God's kingdom comes by way of the process known as conversion, but getting God's kingdom to visibly manifest itself in the daily abundant life comes through your commitment.

Getting into God's kingdom once this life concludes is a gift of salvation through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But getting God's kingdom provisions and sanctification to you in the here and now is a special grace given in response to your dedication.

Commitment and dedication results only when the Jesus you placed your faith in is also the Jesus who rules within you—in the kingdom of which you are a part. God's kingdom goal is to manifest in history the operations of heaven. Therefore, when history does not reflect heaven—when Thy will is not done on earth as it is in heaven—then God's kingdom remains hidden in the shadows of this world. It is not visible.

His kingdom is manifestly visible to the degree that the persons of history emulate the Presence of heaven.

REFLECTION: What does it mean for God's kingdom to be visible on earth today? What would it look like for your church, your neighborhood, your workplace, and your family to see reflections of God's kingdom today? How can you bring God's kingdom values into your own life?

Father, grant me the "more and better life"—the abundant life of which Jesus Christ speaks. I realize that this comes through commitment and dedication to Him and to You, as Lord and King. You also call this abiding. Teach me to abide that I may know while yet on earth the fullness of Your heavenly grace.

JANUARY 16: THE KING'S SERVANTS

My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My Kingdom is not of this realm. (John 18:36)

Too many believers today are trying to find fulfillment and significance through human means. They are trying to discover their destinies through man's methods. However, man's methods have never accomplished God's goals. Jesus revealed that fully when He answered Pilate straightforwardly. Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My Kingdom is not of this realm" (John 18:36).

In essence, He said, "My method reflects My source." As believers, we are called to be in the world, but not of the world. Similarly, a boat is made to be in the water but not of the water. If the boat begins to be of the water and starts taking on water inside of it, it will soon go down.

To be in the world and yet not of the world means that worldliness does not define your decisions, relationships, priorities, or even the cadence of how you flow. The King and His kingdom controls your methodology. You seek Him first.

REFLECTION: How important is it that a Christian be in the world? How can one be *in* the world but not *of* the world? Where is your own experience on "in, but not of" out of balance?

Father, help me to let go of my own agenda and my own methods. Enable me to trust You in how things happen, and to trust that You have a way to accomplish Your will in my life. I give You thanks in advance for all You are doing in and through me.

JANUARY 17: INVISIBLE ROOTS OF THE VISIBLE

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Everything visible and physical is controlled or derived from that which is invisible and spiritual. If you want to fix the visible and physical problems you are experiencing in your life, you have to address the spiritual and invisible issues behind them.

Why? Because if you don't address the spiritual and invisible, then you will not have addressed the divine precursor from which to solve the tangibly manifested issues at hand. What you can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell in your physical senses must first be addressed from God's realm before you can make any lasting and real difference on the earthly level.

Satan wants to get you to skip the divine perspective because he knows that you will never be able to solve your visible and physical problems until you address them from the divine realm. Heaven rules earth. What happens up there determines what goes on down here. So in order to actualize success in the challenges that you face, you need to remain in contact with heaven in order to tap into the solutions you desire for earth. In other words, abide in Christ.

REFLECTION: Do you agree or disagree that everything physical has a spiritual reality behind it? Why? How does the spiritual reality of life relate to your own life? *How* do you abide in Christ?

Lord, open my eyes to see Your vast kingdom which exists in the invisible realm. Remind me in my daily activities to keep Your presence and power in the forefront of my mind. Divert my gaze from the problems or issues that I can see to the root which lies hidden behind them so that I may overwhelmingly conquer through Christ Jesus my Lord.

JANUARY 18: KEEPING SIGHT OF WHAT MATTERS MOST

*Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)*

God's kingdom is lived from the perspective of heaven, not earth. That's why Jesus said, "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

What far too many Christians do is mix a little of God with a lot of the world. Is this something that you have done? Have you wound up experiencing less of God because His kingdom is not of this world? When you bring the world into the Word, you are asking the King to bless something that His kingdom is not a part of, and He won't do it.

If you lose sight of the kingdom, God's perspective gets lost and you start focusing on the tangible and temporal things in life. When that happens, your judgment begins to be skewed and your decisions become shortsighted. Rather than living out your destiny and purpose, you may end up with wasted time, effort, energy, and emotions.

Yet when God's kingdom is prioritized, you get to see heaven both rule and overrule in your life. You will witness God trump circumstances and people that you thought had the last word. Only God has the last word. You get to experience Him at a whole other level when you experience Him as King.

REFLECTION: How can a Christian prioritize God's Word and His kingdom? How can we experience earth from a heavenly perspective? Where are earthly circumstances overwhelming your own vision and blocking your view of God? How can you change this?

Father, I want to experience You as King in my life. Reveal to me where I am looking to the world's way rather than Your way in my thoughts, decisions, and actions. Help me to align all of these underneath Your Word so that I can benefit from the covering of Your covenant and kingdom.

JANUARY 19: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

*The Lord has established His throne in the heavens,
and His sovereignty rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)*

As you seek to align your life underneath God's kingdom agenda, you are coming underneath His sovereign rule. Sovereignty refers to God's supremacy over all of His creation—visible and invisible. His rules are universal, absolute, and comprehensive. God is accountable to no one.

Many people don't like or understand this word—sovereignty. But it is intrinsic within God's character and makeup. In Psalm 103:19, David wrote, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." In other words, God is not operating by anyone's permission. He sovereignly rules over each and every one of us. He sovereignly rules over you.

Look at Psalm 115:3: "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." Embracing that truth is a vital part to living a successful and abundant life. Recognizing that God reigns above all can give you the confidence you need to trust Him in your day-to-day decisions. After all, He is in charge.

His claim of absolute sovereignty is the claim of Perfect Deity. God alone has the right to such a claim. Yet through His gift of His son, Jesus Christ, He has opened the door freely to you to commune with the One who sits high and lifted up over all.

REFLECTION: In what ways is it a good thing that God is sovereign? How can God's sovereignty give you confidence? Thank God that He is in control and He is good.

Sovereign Lord, You have established Your throne and Your rule. You tell the sun to rise, the rain to fall, the grass to grow, and the earth to rotate on its axis. Everything is dependent upon You. I want to honor You in my heart and in my choices in such a way that shows You I recognize Your kingdom rule over all. Enable me to do this today, and each day.

JANUARY 20: GOD'S RECIPE

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Sometimes I walk into the kitchen to see what my wife is cooking. She may be putting together a meal that does not look to me like it's going anywhere. It's a little of this and a little of that and a little of the other. I'll say, "What are you making?"

She will answer, "Wait and see."

If I have the patience to wait while she puts her special touch to the meal, when it comes to the table all I can say is, "Delicious."

That's how God works. He takes a little of this and a little of that and a little of the other that might not look too tasty on its own. Yet in His sovereignty, He can mix it, stir in a little omnipresence, add some omnipotence, a dash of grace, throw in a little goodness, mix in a little mercy, and combine it all together. Then, when it comes out of the oven, all you can say is, "Excellent."

But the only ones who can say "excellent" are those who love God and are committed to His purpose. You've got to be on His agenda, not on your own. You've got to be following His path, not your own. It's not, "Lord, this is what I want." Rather, it's "Lord, what do You want?" That is the question that defines a life lived in the abundance of the King and His kingdom.

REFLECTION: Where have you seen, in your own life, God work bad circumstances for your good or that of those you love? What examples do we have in Scripture of such instances? Why do we find it hard to trust God in hard or uncertain times? Why should we trust Him anyway?

Father, grant me the patience to wait with a trusting spirit as You arrange the situations and experiences in my life for Your good and glory. I know that You will accomplish good in and through me if I will commit my heart to love You and seek Your will. Thank you for what You are doing—even that which I cannot yet see.

JANUARY 21: EVERYTHING FOR HIS GLORY

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)*

All things operate for the purpose of God's glory. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." As you may already know, *amen* means "so be it." There it is. That's it. God's glory is the bottom line in His kingdom. It is His goal.

Paul said that everything is *from* God. He is the first cause, the source. Then Paul said that *through* Him everything is. God is also the effective cause of everything in creation. And finally, Paul said that everything is *to* Him. He is the final cause. It all returns to Him to bring Him glory forever.

It is crucial that you understand that God created the universe for His pleasure and His glory (Revelation 4:11), including the creation of you (Isaiah 43:7). God did not make the world first and foremost for you but for Himself. Everything is created to bring Him glory, and that means you, too. That is your chief aim—your highest purpose. You are to reflect Him and His ways through your thoughts, choices, and actions in such a way that people look at you and can't help but give glory to God.

REFLECTION: How can the creation of mankind bring glory to God? How do His other actions do so? How can people bring God glory? How can you and your family honor and glorify God this week?

God, Your glory is intrinsic within You. Whether I give You glory or not, You are glory. I want to know the sweetness that comes from living a life that glorifies You. Make me an instrument of Your praise and let the words that come from my mouth show off the wondrous works of Your hands in my heart and life.

JANUARY 22: SATAN'S TEMPORARY KINGDOM

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! (Isaiah 14:12)

At the beginning of known time, a rebellion took place in heaven. The “star of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12), the beautiful and powerful angel once known as Lucifer, raised his head and his hand in an attempt to take God’s throne from Him (vv. 13–14).

God had no trouble defending His throne, and Lucifer was defeated and kicked out of heaven’s kingdom. Now he is Satan, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)—no doubt disgruntled, vengeful, and on a mission to reclaim the power and prestige he once had. For a short time, God has permitted Satan to act as the ruler of a rival kingdom, the world of unsaved humanity and the demons of hell. At this time, Satan has his own kingdom, and we can see and feel its effect everywhere. Whenever you witness rebellion rise up against legitimate authority, you are seeing Satan at work. The thing that characterizes him and his kingdom is rebellion against divine authority. While Satan’s work might be obvious in the world around you, he will often try to subtly sway you into a spirit of rebellion against God as well. Be on the alert for his schemes which aim to remove God from His rightful place as ruler over your life.

REFLECTION: What does Satan wish to gain from getting humans to side against God? What can humans gain in such temptation? How is Satan defeated in your own life, and that of your fellow Christians?

Dear Lord, I want to be on the alert for Satan’s schemes in my life. Grant me insight and awareness to detect these schemes. Grant me also the strength and wisdom that will take me down a path to avoid falling for his tricks to mislead me. You are my rightful King. May I seek to honor You in that position with my thoughts, words, and actions each day.

JANUARY 23: GOD'S GLORY IS HIS ALONE

There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood . . . (Proverbs 6:16–17)

Satan's original name, "Lucifer," means "shining one, star." Lucifer was God's "chief angel in charge." But one day he looked into the mirror and became all too smitten with himself. He answered his own riddle, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, I'm the fairest of them all." Satan got what we would call a "God complex," making him quickly dissatisfied with his position.

Eyeing God's throne, he wondered, *Maybe there's room for two.*

Ezekiel explains God's response, "By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:16).

We get a glimpse into Satan's haughtiness and boasting, which led to God's response, when we read of his five "I will" statements found in the book of Isaiah. These statements clearly outline Satan's root sin, which is pride. Scripture tells us clearly that pride is first on God's "hate list" (Proverbs 6:16–17). One reason God hates pride is that it is the fundamental attitude of the kingdom that rivals His own. The next time you feel tempted to take glory for that which should belong to God, remember what happened to Satan.

REFLECTION: What was God's response to Satan's attempt to climb up higher than a mere creature (Isaiah 14:12–17)? Why does God hate pride? Where is pride lurking in your own life? What will your response be?

Lord, pride is a sin that seeks to take glory away from You. It is a sin that You hate strongly. Sometimes it is easier to look at more obvious sins as those that offend You while ignoring this one that often remains internal in the heart. Lord, help me not to feel superior to those who are caught in obvious sins and help me to recognize the subtle sin of pride when it swells within me so that I can be convicted to humble myself before You.

JANUARY 24: OUR SPIRITUAL FOE

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

We don't have to be Christians for very long to discover that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground. This is because we are waging war in a conflict with a spiritual foe. One of Satan's strategies is to get us to forget that we are fighting a spiritual battle and to focus on the physical, tangible challenges we face instead. Unfortunately, he will often use people to do just that.

Do you ever think, "My life would be so wonderful if it weren't for people"?

Most of the problems that we face, in one way or another, can be traced back to people. It could be your mate, your family, your coworkers, or even people with whom you simply do business.

If you look a bit closer, though, behind the scenes of these conflicts and challenges in your life, you will see someone else who is lurking there with a conniving scheme to disarm and defeat you. That someone is Satan—busy pulling the strings and pushing the buttons in this invisible war raging all around us.

One of Satan's primary strategies is to use people to engineer our spiritual downfall by driving wedges between us that shatter our unity and draw our focus away from God. God is a God of unity, and He hangs out where oneness abounds.

REFLECTION: Where has a wedge been driven in unity between you and fellow Christians? Where have you erred in the other direction, ignoring truth in order to "get along" with someone? Is there anyone in your life with whom you need to be reconciled, or to whom you need to confess that you have been living under a false peace of ignoring truth?

Dear God, it is easy to become distracted by what someone else is doing or saying and think that they are the real problem when, in fact, Satan is simply using them to bring about disunity and harm. Give me a heart of kindness, compassion, and understanding—knowing that You love each of us and seek for us to live lives in unity under You.

JANUARY 25: PEOPLE ARE NOT YOUR PROBLEM

And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." (Mark 9:29)

One of the main truths you need to embrace with regard to Satan is understanding that people are not your problem. Satan is your problem. And Satan is their problem, too. We Christians are all in the same war, and we all have the same enemy. Angels and demons are spirit beings without a physical form. Sometimes demons inhabit a form that they can use for their own ends. For example, Satan slithered in the garden as a snake. Jesus sent the legion of demons to drown in the bodies of swine.

Your problem isn't the person you think it is. Your problem is that a demon is influencing them toward disruption.

Until you realize that your struggle is not with people but with the "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"—you will never live out the victory Christ Jesus has secured for you. The next time you face a challenge or enter into a conflict with someone, go to the Lord in prayer. On your knees, fight—and win—this battle, for the victory is the Lord's. Pray for peace, protection, and wisdom for all parties involved and then watch what the Lord will do.

REFLECTION: In what relationship have you been tempted to think that the other person is your problem? What would Satan want you to do in regard to this person / issue? What does the Bible say about it? How can you pray for this person?

Dear Father, I ask You for peace, protection and wisdom in my own heart as well as in the hearts of those I am in conflict with right now, or may come into conflict with in the future. Grant us eyes to see what Satan is trying to do, and grant us the love that is necessary to treat each other with respect and honor as coheirs of the grace of God. Show us the right way to overcoming conflict and living victoriously under You.

JANUARY 26: GRACE FREELY SUPPLIED

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Do you ever feel weak and helpless in the struggles of life? The strength that you need to successfully do battle with the devil has already been supplied to you by God. You already have all that you need to win this war. Your strength is not accumulated nor is it earned. It is supplied by the grace of God, who equips you to live the life to which you have been called. Paul penned, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."

Notice in the passage that Paul tells you to be *strong in the Lord*. In your humanity, you do not have the power to overcome angels—even fallen ones like the devil and his legions. God Himself is the only One capable of putting the devil in his place. He is the One who empowers you to achieve victory in your encounters with darkness, because your victory rests in Him.

Doing battle with Satan requires more than a dose of willpower. All warfare requires weaponry. Spiritual warfare requires spiritual weaponry. These weapons are given to you by God, and when you wear and apply them, you are assured the victory that God has in store for you. Your strength comes from Him. Wear it well and you will experience His victory in your life.

REFLECTION: Where do you need strength today? What have you been relying on to supply your strength? In what area do you need God's wisdom? Pray for His strength and His wisdom, and wait on Him.

God, my strength is in You. I do not have the ability to overcome Satan or his demons or their schemes in my own strength. But You have more than enough power to do so if I will align myself under You and tap into Your strength. Give me a reminder somehow when I am starting to face my battles alone. Gently nudge me that I may remember to find my strength and victory in You and in Your might.

JANUARY 27: THINKING SPIRITUALLY

... so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

If you don't know how to function in "heavenly places," you are going to face challenges in your earthly places. Many believers are trying to "live heavenly" without living *in* the heavenly places.

In the heavenly places, God and Satan are at war to see who will establish the rules that govern earth. The nature of Satan's kingdom makes it imperative that you learn to think spiritually. Why? Because if you are not thinking spiritually, you won't be in tune with what is happening in the heavenly realms. You won't recognize Satan's agenda when you see it, so you won't be able to wage victorious spiritual warfare.

Living and battling in the heavenly places means identifying with a spiritual worldview and participating in a divine frame of reference. You need to learn to put the spiritual ahead of the physical, because your real battle is against a kingdom that seeks to influence and dominate you spiritually. Satan knows that if he can get you hooked into his way of thinking spiritually, the physical will follow. He knows that if he can get to your mind, he can dictate the actions that follow. To wage victorious warfare in the heavenly places, you must set your mind on Christ and His truth.

REFLECTION: Based on what occupies your thoughts, what has been your first priority today? This week? Are your thoughts focused on temporary, earthly issues or on ones of eternal significance? How can you do a "priority adjustment" toward a focus on the eternally significant?

Lord, I know that my victory lies in the heavenly places. That means I need to think spiritually—from Your perspective and not my own. Give me spiritual eyes to see what You are doing and what Your strategy is for defeating the enemy's schemes in my life. Open my heart to know when Satan is seeking to defeat me, and grant me joy as I set my mind on Jesus Christ and the pureness of His love and power.

JANUARY 28: RULING UNDER GOD'S AUTHORITY

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:1-2)

When God created Adam and Eve, He said, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26). Then God told them to "subdue" the earth (v. 28). This is known in theological terms as the Dominion Covenant.

In other words, it was impossible that God would not have a kingdom that would rule over and defeat the kingdom of Satan. When Jesus Christ sets up His millennial kingdom, it will be the final, triumphant declaration of God's glory. Satan will then be chained up during that time to demonstrate his utter defeat and judgment (Revelation 20:1-3).

Yet, for now, God has created you and me to harness and rule a part of His creation. Every person was created with that divine intent.

Why is it important for you to grasp the unfolding of God's kingdom? Because when God said "let them rule," He made that statement for you. This is your commission from God. God stated that He would not rule independently of man—that mankind's decisions would now carry weight regarding what He did or did not do.

He did this for one reason—to demonstrate to the devil that He could do more through a lesser creature—through you—in manifesting His glory than through the once "shining star." God has a plan for you that is bigger than you.

REFLECTION: Has Satan's kingdom gained a foothold in your life or your thoughts? What has God done about Satan's kingdom? Read and meditate on Revelation 20.

Lord, You desire to shine through me. I am humbled that You have chosen me to demonstrate to Satan and his demons that You can accomplish great things through me when I commit my life to You. Jesus, help me to rule wisely. Enable me to influence the realms in which You have placed me well. Expand my influence that I may be used to demonstrate great things in Your name and to bring You glory.

JANUARY 29: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S WILL

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

A number of people think that there is a battle going on between God and the devil. There is no battle going on between God and the devil. If there was, it wouldn't last long. That's like saying, "Tony Evans and Mike Tyson are fighting." Sure, we might both climb into the ring together to duke it out, but I would be no match for Mike, even at his age now.

Satan, a created being, is no match for the omnipotent Creator. That's not even a fight. But what God did do was create an inferior creature—humanity—you, who are not even competition with Satan or his demons on our own, to demonstrate that in this spiritual battle, even the inferior creature can win when he or she operates according to God's governance, authority, and kingdom agenda.

You and I were cast in a cosmic conflict to manifest God's rule in history for the advancement of His kingdom and the reflection of His glory. And one way this is done is through the Dominion Covenant—your ability and commission to rule through decisions that are made in alignment with God's sovereign rule.

REFLECTION: What does it mean to be made in God's image? Why does a Christian not need to fear Satan? What authority do you have under the Dominion Covenant? How is your authority limited?

God, I'm excited to see what You are going to do in and through me. You have created me to carry out Your influence on earth. You have also embodied me with Your Holy Spirit so that when Satan seeks to disrupt me somehow, You can defeat him. I look forward to all that You have planned as I learn to place myself under Your comprehensive rule in my life.

JANUARY 30: THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

The first conversation between the devil and a human being is about God. Not only that, but it's about God's word. Satan asked Eve, "Indeed, has God said . . .?" Satan did this because he knew that in order to get rid of God's rule, he had to get rid of the authority of His word.

A very important part of Satan's strategy is that he did not seek to get rid of religion. The whole conversation is about God. In fact, he even goes so far as to tell Eve that she can be "like God" (Genesis 3:5). Satan doesn't mind religion. You can go to church all day long if you want to. What he does mind is when you acknowledge God as ruler over your life. This is evidenced through a very clever maneuver Satan did linguistically with Eve.

Prior to the conversation between the woman and the snake, God is referenced in Scripture as "Lord God" which means "ruler, absolute authority."

Yet when Satan talked with Eve, he removed the word "Lord ." He removed the fundamental principle of God as the rightful king over His kingdom. The issue in the garden was whose word would be final. Will God be "Lord God"? Or will you just say that He is "God" while making your own decisions?

REFLECTION: What is the difference between religion that gives a nod to God and biblical Christianity? Are you at times tempted to acknowledge God but avoid acknowledging His lordship over you? What areas of your life have been hands-off to God's lordship? What will you do about this?

Lord God—Jehovah Elohim, I look to You as both my Creator and my Lord. You are holy, righteous, powerful, and pure. May I never separate religion from a relationship with You. Keep me from turning the divine truth of who You are into a mere duty. You are my Lord and You are also my God.

JANUARY 31: GOD'S GLORY AND HUMAN PURPOSE

[Satan said], "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

Whenver you allow the evil one to cause you to question the ultimate authority of God in your life, you jeopardize your influence in His kingdom. That is why so many Christians never fully live out their destiny. You were not designed to live a purposeless life. God has given you a responsible position to fill as manager in His kingdom.

In the garden, Satan challenged God's authority as the Ruler of His kingdom. His strategy is revealed in Genesis 3:5, where the serpent told Eve, "God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan tried to persuade Eve to think that God was being jealous of His deity. But Satan knew no one could be like God. How did he know? Because he had tried it already himself and got thrown out of heaven. Satan attempted to sell Eve the same exact lie he had once sold himself.

God created you for His glory. So whenever you try to take glory for yourself and live independently of Him, you are living outside of your intended purpose.

REFLECTION: Take time to think through the good things God has placed in your life. Take time to think through the character qualities God has, and which He uses for His glory and your benefit. As you think through who God is, thank Him for His attributes (character qualities).

Father, the air I breathe comes from You. The lungs that take it in come from You. The sun that gives me warmth comes from You. The food I eat comes from You. Nothing that I have done or could ever do comes from me. You are the Creator and Sustainer of all things. I give You praise because I know that I am fully dependent upon You.

FEBRUARY 1: A FAITHFUL MANAGER

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

When we abdicate our management role in God's kingdom and start acting like the owner, we bring a lot of challenges on ourselves. The kingdom agenda does not include our ownership.

If you have ever rented somewhere and then owned a home, you know the difference between being a manager and an owner. When you rent a home or an apartment, your landlord takes responsibility for most of the building's upkeep because you don't own it. But if you own the house, when the roof goes bad, you get to fix it. When the water heater goes out, you buy a new one. There are responsibilities that come with ownership.

That's also true in life. If you want to be the owner of your life and live as though God has no say over you, He is going to respond, "You want to own your life? Okay, when it breaks down, you get to fix it."

The great sin of the Bible is to live independently of God, to try to live as if God does not exist. Satan wants you to become like him—in rebellion against God. Satan wants you to stop thinking like a manager and start thinking like an owner. Yet God wants you to faithfully steward that which He has placed in your care by looking to Him as the owner of all.

REFLECTION: Do you rent or own your home? What are the advantages of ownership? Of renting? What are the advantages of being a manager of your life? Are there any areas of your life where you have claimed "ownership"? Thank God that He is in control of all things, freeing you from ownership duties!

Lord, You are the owner of all things. You have blessed me with favor, enabling me to manage the things You have placed in my care. But I know that You own all. Gently nudge me if I begin to start acting or thinking as if I am the owner. I pray for Your kind reminder so that I can align my heart and mind correctly under You, yielding You the authority that is rightfully due the owner of all things.

FEBRUARY 2: WORKING WITH-OR AGAINST- JESUS' AUTHORITY

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between
your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head,
and you shall bruise him on the heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, they lost out on God's intent for their work in His kingdom (Genesis 3:8–24). They got kicked out of Eden, much like Satan got kicked out of heaven. But even in the midst of His judgment, God let Adam and Eve know it would not always be like this. He gave them the promise of a Redeemer who would reverse the curse of sin (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus will also reverse the effects of Satan's and mankind's rebellion against God's kingdom when He comes to rule in His kingdom. When you honor Jesus as Lord of the kingdom agenda, it opens up the floodgate of both His power and authority to be made manifest in your life on earth.

Lucifer, the once shining star, set out to set up a rival kingdom and a rival throne to the one, true God. As a result, he lost not only his position but his authority in God's kingdom. Now, God has given you the opportunity—through aligning yourself under Him—to demonstrate all that can be done through a lesser being who is fully committed to the manifestation of His glory and the advancement of His kingdom.

REFLECTION: What is the difference between God's judgment of Satan and His judgment of Adam and Eve? (Read Genesis 3:15.) How did Jesus' death and resurrection cancel the rebellion in the garden for those who believe? What does it mean to have authority from God?

*Jesus Christ, thank You for Your ability to reverse the effects of rebellion
against God whether that comes from Satan or humanity—including myself.
Thank You that You embody the hope we all need to know that things are going
to be okay. I commit myself to align my thoughts, heart, and actions under
God and His comprehensive rule over every area of my life.*

FEBRUARY 3: ALL THINGS UNDER CHRIST

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22–23)

God has given the ultimate authority over what happens in history to His Son, Jesus Christ. He has placed all things in subjection to Him.

One of the reasons you might not live in light of this truth is that you could be confusing the terms “power” and “authority.” Satan still has power. He still dominates the world in which we live and influences people’s lives in countless ways. He is as powerful now as he has ever been. His tactics and destruction are both real and damaging. But what he doesn’t have is final authority. Authority is the right to use the power that you possess.

For example, on the football field the players are bigger and stronger—more powerful—than the referees. The referees are older, smaller, and more out of shape than the players. The players can knock you down—power. But the referees can put you out—authority.

Satan has power, but the only way he is free to use that power over the lives of individuals, families, churches, or even the broader society is the failure to operate from under the rightful headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan does not have the authority to use his power when you function under the covenantal covering of Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION: Does Satan have authority over you? Why is his power over you limited? Thank God that He has both power and authority in your life.

Dear Jesus, You hold the authority over all things. Satan likes to push me around and try to intimidate me with his power, but Your authority trumps his power. Lord, help me to always keep that truth at the forefront of my mind. Show me how to align my thoughts with Your Word so that I will walk in the authority that comes from knowing You.

FEBRUARY 4: PROTECTION UNDER CHRIST

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

Have you ever been outside, far from cover, when a storm came up? One of the enemy's goals is to try to lure you out from under the lordship of Jesus Christ. He knows that if he can get you out from under Christ's covering, he has free rein to deceive, trick, and harm you however he chooses. It is under the covering of the lordship of Christ that you stand protected. You remain underneath this covering by abiding in Christ and the authority of His Word.

Colossians 1:13 tells us that God has "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." When you got saved, God rescued you from the authority of darkness and out of the wrong kingdom. By rescuing you, He transferred you so that you can live out your days under the rule of a new king, Christ.

Yet you can be saved but still be functioning out from underneath the covering of Jesus Christ. This is when you, like Adam and Eve in the garden, make your decisions based on your desires rather than based on the wisdom and direction of God's Word.

REFLECTION: Are you living in Christ's kingdom or Satan's? If you are living under Christ's authority, do your choices reflect that? What does God's Word say about making righteous decisions? (If you aren't sure, this would be a great idea for a Bible study.) As you make decisions, pray and search out what God's Word says on the subject.

*Father, I want to make my decisions based on the wisdom and direction of Your Word. Grant me the passion and the desire to study and learn Your Word so much that it becomes real within my thoughts and guides my decisions.
Help me to make knowing Your Word a priority in my life.*

FEBRUARY 5: CONTRARY KINGDOMS

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

A prevalent strategy that Satan seeks to introduce into your life is to get you to leave the kingdom rule of Jesus Christ and come back over to his. Much of this happens through the division of the secular and the sacred. This is done when you attend and participate in church under one kingdom, then you go out into the world Monday to Saturday and function there under the influence of another kingdom. You might do a Bible study in one kingdom, then do your socializing under the influence of the worldview of the other kingdom—Satan's domain. Essentially, when you flip-flop kingdoms depending on the activity you are participating in, or the day of the week, you do not fully actualize or experience the victory and rule that comes with the abundant life in Christ.

Satan ends up ruling people's lives because they are yielding the power to him—not by way of any rightful authority that he has but simply because of a failure to align their thoughts and decisions under the lordship of Jesus Christ. By not giving Jesus Christ the proper place in your home, church, work, relationships, entertainment choices, and wherever, you lose the full presence of His covering.

REFLECTION: In your daily life (work, class, family life), do you make decisions based on what God's Word says, or using other grids and patterns? If someone were to ask your counsel on how to make a good decision, what would you say? How can you help your children, or young people in your life, learn godly decision making?

Lord, I do not want to be a follower of Christ only on Sundays, or only when it seems convenient to me. I realize that for me to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, Jesus needs to be Lord over all of my life. I give You my life, thoughts, and actions at this very moment—they are all Yours to guide and direct. Let me be a follower who knows and honors You throughout every moment of my life.

FEBRUARY 6: KINGDOM TRANSFER

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

When you accepted Jesus Christ as your sin-bearer, you transferred kingdoms. Jesus Christ is then to be preeminent in your life—He is to have first place in all things. Only as you acknowledge and submit to the lordship of Christ can the power and authority of God's kingdom be made visible in your life. God explicitly states that it is His intentional purpose to bring all of history under the rule of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

Transferring kingdoms can best be illustrated by what happens when a single woman gets married. When she marries, she is transferred from the kingdom of her father to the kingdom of her husband. She is no longer underneath her father's headship, but rather she is under her husband's headship. The surest way to have problems in a family is for a married woman to go to her father to overrule her husband in her life choices. When that happens, there is inevitably a conflict of kingdoms.

As a child of God, you have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Problems arise when you start listening to the old head, Satan, who owns and runs the kingdom of darkness. This brings you in direct conflict with the kingdom of God.

REFLECTION: How did you transfer from Satan's "kingdom" to God's? What authority do Satan and his kingdom have over you? Why is it important that Jesus is the Lord of *all* creation and history?

Lord, I am truly grateful that You have rescued me from the kingdom of darkness and have transferred me into the kingdom of light. Thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—His death, burial, and resurrection. Thank You that I belong to You. Help me to listen to You and Your wisdom as I make decisions in the light of Your Word.

FEBRUARY 7: DYING WITH CHRIST

Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:5–6)

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, when Christ died, you died with Him. When Christ arose, you arose with Him. When Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, you were seated with Him. You were made to function in concert and cadence with Jesus Christ.

In order for you to access Christ's sovereign authority over all things, you and your world must be aligned underneath His headship. This includes your thoughts, choices, words, and perspective. It is as you align yourself under Him and His Word that His authority becomes manifest in your own life as you seek to advance God's kingdom on earth.

In fact, you can go to all of the church services that you want, read all of the spiritual books you want—but until you place yourself under the comprehensive rule of God in every area of your life by aligning yourself under the lordship of Jesus Christ, you will not fully realize nor maximize the rule and authority He has destined for you.

REFLECTION: Who did the work to transfer you to Christ's kingdom? Who now does the work of making you holy? How does God's Word work in your life to conform you to the image of Christ? How is God currently working through you to advance His kingdom on earth? Are you more concerned about His kingdom or your own?

Father, I want to fully realize the rule and authority that You have destined for me. I want to live out all of my days in the abundance that You have promised to give me through Jesus Christ. I place my heart, thoughts, and actions underneath Your divine and sovereign authority.

FEBRUARY 8: PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST

Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32–33)

To operate correctly, the wheels on a car must be in proper alignment with each other. Puzzle pieces don't join to become a recognizable picture unless the pieces are correctly aligned.

Part of alignment under the authority of Jesus Christ involves a willingness to publicly declare and demonstrate commitment to and an association with Him. To put it another way, if you are a secret-agent Christian—or a spiritual CIA representative—you have not made Jesus the Lord in your life.

Jesus makes a clear tie between His followers' public acknowledgment and confession of Him before men and His confession of us before the Father. Now, keep in mind, Jesus doesn't say if you confess My Father before men then I will confess you before Him. It's easy to say you believe in God. People pour so many different definitions into the one word "God," that when it comes down to it—just saying "God" doesn't mean a whole lot anymore. Yet when you publicly confess Jesus Christ, everyone knows who you are talking about. The name Jesus is ultra specific.

As long as you remain a secret agent saint, you won't be maximizing both the kingdom power and authority that are rightfully yours through Christ. It is much more than simply believing in God. In fact, Satan believes in God. Alignment under the lordship of Christ—putting Him in first place—involves publicly declaring and demonstrating an association with Him in both your words and actions.

REFLECTION: Why is public recognition of Christ important? What does this mean? Do people around you know that you identify with Jesus Christ? How well do you represent Christ in your daily life?

Jesus, I confess You in my heart but I also want to confess You publicly where I live, work, and associate. Show me opportunities I have to proclaim Your name. Reveal to me places that I can speak Your name and give a testimony of Your power in my life. May I never be silent when it comes to publicly declaring my association with You, the Lord Jesus Christ.

FEBRUARY 9: WHO'S GOT YOUR BACK

*For there is one God, and one mediator also between
God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)*

When my son Jonathan played football, he was a fullback. The job of a fullback is to run interference for a halfback. The halfback gets the ball while the fullback goes out in front of him, because there is an enemy trying to get in there and tackle the halfback. The fullback's mission is to get rid of the enemy so that the halfback can get through the line.

Jesus runs interference for you as His kingdom follower. Your enemy is seeking to defeat you; he is seeking to overwhelm you. But what you need to keep in mind is that you have a blocker out in front: Jesus.

However, Jesus has stated clearly that He's not going to block for you if you won't even acknowledge or confess Him. Why should He run interference for someone who is just going to deny that He is even there?

He states clearly—confess Him before others, and He's got your back. Marginalize, sideline, or dismiss Him . . . and you've got your own back. The question on the floor for you today is: Who do you want to have your back? You, or Jesus?

REFLECTION: Why is "Confess Christ before others" a prerequisite for Christ confessing us before His Father? Why do you need Jesus to confess you before the Father? How are you confessing Christ in your own life? How has He called you to do more?

Jesus, You are always ready to make intercession for me. You are always there when I need You. Please forgive me for those times in my life when I marginalize You. Forgive me when I forget You. Forgive me when I try to take credit for that which You have done. I love You, Jesus. Help me to show that love more clearly through my words and actions.

FEBRUARY 10: JESUS AS LORD

... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9–10)

When you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, His righteousness was immediately imputed to you as your righteousness. You were “saved” in the eternal sense of the word. Yet when you make a public confession of Jesus Christ as your Lord, you are “saved” as well—you receive His deliverance in the here and now, in history (Romans 10:9–10).

The word *saved* in Romans 10:9 means to be rescued, or delivered. The reason why a lot of people who are going to heaven are not seeing heaven join them in history is that they have believed but they have not confessed. They have declared within themselves whom they are trusting for their salvation. But they have not made an ongoing public confession of Him as their Lord—through word and deed.

In biblical days, Christians would be brought before the magistrates because they were declaring Jesus as Lord in both speech and actions. The term *lord* means supreme ruler or authority. The Roman authorities would attempt to get the Christians to declare Caesar as lord, and to deny Jesus as supreme ruler and authority. Believing in Jesus didn't get the Christians hung or tossed to the lions for sport. Believing in Jesus as the rightful ruler and lord did. There's a difference.

REFLECTION: When has God given you an opportunity to confess Him this week? How has God shown His goodness in your life and that of your family? How do we see His goodness in Scripture—and how can you proclaim that to others this week?

Jesus, You are the Lord of my life. Give me the grace to make that clear through every area of my life. Grant me the boldness to proclaim Your name publicly and to share the goodness of who You are with others.

FEBRUARY 11: ME, SLAVE OF CHRIST

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. (Romans 1:1)

The reason you may not be seeing more of God's rescue and deliverance in your life is that you may have Jesus positioned as your Savior, but not as your Lord. And you may not have positioned yourself as His slave. The book of Romans opens up with these words, "Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus . . ." (Romans 1:1). A bondservant is translated from *doulos*, which literally means "slave." The job of a slave is do whatever the master says to do. It's as straightforward as that.

Unfortunately today, in most of our lives Jesus has too many other masters with whom He has to compete. But the important thing to remember is that Jesus is not willing to be one among many. He is not willing to be part of an association or a club. Neither is He willing to be relegated as a personal assistant. Jesus as Lord means that Jesus is to be the one and only supreme ruler and master in your life. He calls the shots, and He is to be acknowledged in everything that is done.

Too many people want a Savior, but don't want a Lord. Because of this, a number of individuals today are experiencing the result of denying Christ publicly.

REFLECTION: What is the difference between Jesus being your Savior and being your Lord? Who or what is master in your life? Where is Jesus calling for your obedience this week?

Jesus, we often make a big deal of Peter denying You by the fire when You were being taken to be tried. But a failure to confess You publicly when I have an opportunity to do so also equates to denying You. Lord, may it never be that my mouth remains closed when it comes to You and Your name.

FEBRUARY 12: CONFESSING CHRIST

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. (2 Timothy 1:8)

A person can call on the name of the Lord all he or she wants for deliverance, but according to Romans 10:9–10, if they have not also confessed the name of the Lord that they call on, their request could be denied. To experience heaven's authority and power on earth, a person must be willing to confess Jesus Christ as Lord publicly in what they say and do.

Christ's investment and involvement in your life hinges upon your public declaration that He is Lord through both your words and actions. Paul told Timothy boldly, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8).

If for no other practical reason than accessing the power of deliverance on earth, you must establish and declare Jesus Christ as Lord in your life and over your world. You must open your mouth publicly and let others know through what you say and do that He is your Lord and Master—that you are not ashamed to be associated with Him and under Him. He is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies, as are you through His redemption on the cross.

Access His power and authority through a public declaration of His lordship in your life. His blood has established the new covenant under which you are to align your life and world in order to receive its full covenantal covering and protection.

REFLECTION: Do you find yourself embarrassed in certain situations to admit that you are a Christian? How has God given you a platform to confess Him publicly? Ask God to give you courage for consistent public confession of Christ.

Dear Lord Jesus, I want to access Your power and authority through public declarations of Your lordship in my life. May You be pleased with the words that come from my mouth and may I honor You in all that I say and do.

FEBRUARY 13: THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:15)

You've probably heard someone say, "I plead the blood." What they are talking about is the blood of the covenant. However, the way you plead the blood of the covenant is not simply by saying some magical words. You plead the blood of the covenant by being under the terms of the covenant—by making Jesus Christ Lord of your life and ruler of your world.

In the Old Testament times, the Israelites couldn't just say, "I plead the blood." No, they had to put the blood on the doorposts in order to plead it. It involved more than merely saying it. They had to align themselves within the protective confines of the walls that were connected to the blood-stained doors. Likewise, today, there must be covenantal alignment under the lordship and rulership of Jesus Christ in order to experience His kingdom power, authority, provision, and covering.

We read about this New Covenant in the book of Hebrews where it says, "And to Jesus, the mediator of a *new covenant*, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). Jesus Christ is the Lord of the new covenant, the unique one-of-a-kind mediator between heaven and earth (1 Timothy 2:5).

REFLECTION: Why was the blood applied to doorposts in the Passover (Exodus 12:21–27)? Why do we need Christ's blood applied to us? Take time to think about Christ's sacrificial death for you, and thank Him.

Jesus, cover me with Your covenantal covering. I seek to align my life underneath You in all that I do. Thank You that You came to create the new covenant from which I can benefit. You are my mediator between myself and God, the Father, and for that I am truly grateful.

FEBRUARY 14: THE MASTER KEY

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6)*

I have a master key to the church. My key can work in any lock. A staff person who works here at the church may have a key to their own office, or even to the section of the building that their office is in. But they are limited in which doors they can open. Yet because I have a master key, I can go anywhere in the church that I want to go.

A lot of us are not getting everywhere we need to go because we don't have the master key. We've got keys for certain rooms. We come to church, hear a sermon, and receive a truth, so we have a key for a certain room in our Christian lives. What you must understand, however, is that the key to the Christian life for the church of Jesus Christ—for your home and your communities—is, in fact, Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. The ability to live victoriously and advance God's kingdom agenda on earth comes through this unique master key called the lordship of Christ.

Only as the lordship of Jesus Christ is reflected through you individually and through His people corporately will the world experience the rule of God as the Creator intended it to be.

REFLECTION: When and how are you learning the truths of God's Word? Why is God's power limited for those who limit their obedience? In what areas of your life have you limited your obedience to God's Word?

Lord, I want our world to experience Your power and rule. Help me to start with me. Help me to continually abide with Christ and align my life under Him. Then enable me to model that lifestyle to those around me so that each of us can demonstrate the power that comes when we are connected to You.

FEBRUARY 15: THE COVENANT OF GOD'S KINGDOM

I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. (Genesis 9:13)

When it comes to the way God governs His kingdom, the word that stands out as the central theme is *covenant*. God administers His kingdom through His covenants.

If you, like me, are a citizen of the United States of America, then you fall underneath a covenantal document called the Constitution. The Constitution is the umbrella document that covers the operations of the kingdom called the USA. This particular constitution is a unique document from many historical documents in that it declares much by way of a proclamation of freedom.

You may hear people say if they feel that they have been treated unjustly, "I know my rights," and then they will appeal to their constitutional rights within the kingdom called America, in particular the amendments attached to the Constitution. These amendments declare the rights, privileges, and authority you have in America as an American citizen.

If you are a Christian, then you are also part of another kingdom—the kingdom of God. And as such, you also have covenantal rights, privileges, and authority. Yet if you do not know those rights, or how to properly exercise your rights, then you can be illegitimately oppressed simply because you are not operating by the instructions or functioning under the umbrella of God's kingdom covenant.

In the Bible, a covenant is a divinely created bond. Friend, you are situated securely within this divinely created bond. It is a *spiritually binding relationship between God and you inclusive of certain agreements, conditions, benefits, responsibilities, and effects*. God's power, provisions, and authority to you operate under His covenants.

REFLECTION: What established God's covenant relationship with you? What privileges has God given you in Christ? Spend time thanking God for His covenant with you, and for adopting you into His family.

Thank You, Lord, for the covenant You have made with me. Thank You for the security that I have in knowing I am firmly within Your care and covering.

FEBRUARY 16: THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP

So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. (Deuteronomy 29:9)

A covenant involves far more than a contract. In a biblical covenant, you not only sign on the dotted line but you enter into an intimate relationship with the other person or persons in the covenant.

In other words, covenants are predicated on a relationship. That's not necessarily true in a contract. You can sign a contract to buy a home and have no personal relationship at all with the seller. You may not even know, or like, the seller. Likewise, you can sign a business deal because the deal makes sense but have no affiliation or relationship with the other party beyond the deal itself.

It is not so in a covenant. One of the primary components that distinguishes a covenant is the reality that it is entered into as a relational agreement. Marriage, for example, is a covenant and not solely a contract. Marriage not only includes a binding agreement, but it also binds the people involved in an intimate relational union.

A covenant is also a relationship of blessing. Whenever God makes a covenant, His intent is for the good of those who covenant with Him. When you enter into a covenant with God, it is so that "you may prosper in all that you do" (Deuteronomy 29:9).

God's covenants are serious, and even inaugurated by blood, because they are meant to make a statement about a significant relationship that has been instated under His rule. You and I are part of God's kingdom, and we are there by a covenant sealed with nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ Himself.

REFLECTION: Why is it good that God relates to us with a covenant, not just a contract? Read Genesis 15. How significant is a covenant with God? The covenant through which God purchased our salvation involved not the death of an animal, but the death of His own Son. Ponder that and thank Him for it.

Father, I am grateful for this relationship of blessing You have invited me into with You. Help me to keep Your commandments in my heart, my mind, and my actions.