

## Day 1

*“And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)*

The first step in any journey is critical. We do need to ask in order to receive. But asking is just the first step. It takes many more steps to continue a real journey of prayer. Jesus offers his disciples a model for such a prayer journey. Ask - yes, of course! But then seek. And finally, knock on the doors that you find.

“Our Journey” of prayer will lead us far past asking, deep into new paths of seeking God's way for our lives. Along those paths we will discover doorways - places where choices and decisions must be made. Do we have the courage and commitment to knock on those doors? And when those new doorways are opened, will we step into a new way of life?

Knocking on the doors that God would open to us may well lead us down paths that we never imagined! We do not know what God has in store for us when we begin such a journey, but one thing is certain – our journey of prayer will change our lives. After all, changing us has always been the real power of prayer.

**Prayer:** Lord, I seek Your guidance and Your way in my life. Lead me down Your paths for Your name's sake. Open new doors that I might find a new way of life!

## Day 2

*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”  
(Colossians 2:6)*

A personal relationship with God is established by faith and a continuous fellowship with God is maintained by faith. We receive Him by faith, and we walk in Him by faith. Without faith we cannot please God, and we cannot live effectively for Him. “Without Faith,” the Bible says, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

II Kings, Chapter 5, records the story of Naaman, a powerful Syrian military leader who was suffering from the most dreaded disease of that era, leprosy. Someone told him that Elisha, the man of God could possibly heal him, so he sought the prophet's help. Elisha instructed Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River to be healed. The great soldier became angry at such a ridiculous suggestion. “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy,” said Naaman to his servants (II Kings 5:11 NIV). At first, he refused, but without any other remedy, Naaman at last went into the river and was healed. The act made no human sense but in the divine plan it was an act of Faith.

Why do we need faith? There is no other way to relate to God, for in His infinite plan He has determined that “the just shall live by faith.”

**Prayer:** Lord increase our faith.

## Day 3

*“Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Lord will fight for you: you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:13)*

God’s power does not operate until we move beyond the realm of our possibilities. As long as we can do it in our own strength, there is no need for God to display His power. We must move beyond our abilities if a watching world will ever see the power of God. This feat is seen clearly in our text as the recently freed Hebrew slaves found themselves surrounded by impossibilities. Before them was a sea that could not be crossed. Beside them was a barren wasteland. Behind them was an enemy that desired to capture them and take them back to where they had been. In this difficult situation they had three options:

1. They could go back.
2. They could stand still.
3. They could go forward.

For the children of God, there is only one real option: Go forward! Before us, there is a future. There is a land that flows with milk and honey. This future is bright and powerful as the promise of God that we find in scripture.

**Prayer:** Help us to not be afraid to move forward with You. Give each of us a promise out of Your word to claim for our church.

## Day 4

*“Epaphras is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, and be mature.” (Colossians 4:12)*

Paul tells the church that Epaphras wrestles in prayer for them. What a powerful image - and a biblical image too - like Jacob wrestling with the angel all night for a blessing (Genesis 32:24-31) - and like Jesus praying so fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane that his sweat became like drops of blood (Luke 22:41-44). What is so important that Epaphras would pray so fervently? That the Colossian church would grow in their knowledge of God's will and in their maturity of faith.

“Our Journey” Capital Stewardship Campaign is a call to prayer for you and for our congregation. You are encouraged to reflect on a simple question -- What would You do through me, Lord, to make Your will happen in this church? Genuinely reflecting on that question will mean prayerfully wrestling with God's will in your life and with God's will in our church.

This challenge is a time to exercise your faith. The struggle to respond faithfully will not be – nor should it be – easy. Like Jacob, you may spend more than one restless night wrestling for an answer and a blessing.

Our church needs an Epaphras or two just now. Our church needs people who will pray earnestly to seek God's will. Would you be willing to pray, to wrestle hard, for the future of this church?

**Prayer:** Lord, lead me in prayer to wrestle hard with Your will. I will hold fast to You until I find Your blessing.

## Day 5

*“She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His head.” (Mark 14:3)*

The story of the Bethany anointing is one of the few stories of Jesus’ life that is contained in all four of the gospels. So impressive was this event that it was indelibly written upon the disciples’ hearts so that they never, ever forgot this act of devotion. Mark uses it as a prelude to the passion events.

May this deed be received as a call to worship for us today. May this deed make us ask ourselves the question, “How much is too much?” This woman’s act set a standard of sacrifice, which none can better, but all can match. That alabaster bottle was very valuable. It was worth a year’s wages. It was to be saved for the most important occasion of one’s life.

What is the most extravagant thing you have done for the Lord? What can we learn from this scripture? Jesus always comes to the defense of those who are criticized for being extravagant in their devotion towards Him.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to love Jesus so much that we will be extravagant with the giving of our time, talent and treasures.

## Day 6

*“Go therefore and make disciples.” (Matthew 28:19)*

The most important question in a capital campaign challenge is not what, but WHY.

Why are we building? Why are we expanding ministries? Why is our church here? Why are you here?

No church builds a structure just to have a nice building. No church expands ministries just to be a bigger church. No person makes a sacrificial financial commitment just to get some kind of service or program benefit.

Every church and every Christian has a God-given purpose. In other words, what is God calling our church to be and to do? What is God's calling for you at our church? And how does “Our Journey” Capital Stewardship Campaign provide tools for our congregation to respond to that calling?

“Our Journey” is not simply about buildings or finances. This campaign is about reaching and teaching and changing the lives of people with the good news of Jesus Christ. The resources raised provide the necessary tools to help us better reach, better teach, more effectively change the lives of those people.

Our lives have been changed by the witness and ministries of this church. Would you like for other people to have a story of faith to tell and a purpose for their lives? Their stories depend now on your faithfulness.

**Prayer:** Lord, grow my passion for Your purposes in my life and in my church. You have brought me here for a reason.

## Day 7

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”  
(Hebrews 11:1)*

In order to tap the endless resources of God, the believer must exercise faith by acting in obedience to God’s Word. As the Apostle Paul explained to the Romans, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17, NKJV) When one is prompted by the Word of God or by the leadership of the Spirit, obedience to that prompting is an expression of faith. Such a response enables one to enter into partnership with God, and gives the assurance of success even though the end may not be in sight.

When Noah was directed by God to build an ark, he obeyed by starting a project that lasted for 100 years. Noah had never experienced a flood, nor had he even seen rain, yet he obeyed with regard only for the Lord. Since the command of God came without a specific schedule, Noah had to believe and act accordingly because faith has no time limit.

**Prayer:** Lord, show me what you would do through me in our capital stewardship campaign. I will respond in faith.

## Day 8

*“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)*

I wonder what the disciples thought when they saw the crowds? Oh great! We'll be here all day, and my feet are already killing me! How in the world will we move Jesus through this crowd? I wonder if He'll want us to find food for everyone? Perhaps they were much more generous than some of us would be. However, Matthew tells us what Jesus thought when he saw the crowds. He thought about how much these helpless people needed Him. He could heal them, save them, change their eternities. But before He had compassion on them, He saw them. He saw their histories, their failures, and their sickness. He saw their broken hearts, their hopelessness, and their confusion. And He was moved with compassion.

**Prayer:** Open the eyes of my heart, Jesus, and help me to feel the compassion You feel for those in my community, in my workplace, at my school. Daily remind me that You are still the answer to every need in our world today!

## DAY 9

*“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:20)*

Let's think about the “rich young ruler” from Mark 10:17-27. He asked Jesus how to attain eternal life. The Bible says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Through His love, Jesus asked for sacrifice. (Interesting...quite the opposite of what we would probably ask from someone we love.) Jesus asked him to sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him. This young man left because the sacrifice was too high. What if he had sold all that he owned and followed Jesus? Perhaps we would know his name. Perhaps there would be another epistle in the Bible for us to read...another Peter, another James, another John, or another Paul. Instead, we simply know him as a man who was too attached to his stuff to respond to the greatest invitation he ever received. Wealth, in itself, is not sinful. But when the attachment to wealth, or pleasure, or comfort, or time keeps you from being obedient to a call to sacrifice, then it is a problem.

**Prayer:** Gracious God! I do not want to be like the rich young ruler! I want to store treasures in heaven. Help me to detach myself from anything that keeps me from having an eternal perspective!

## Day 10

*“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)*

Yesterday we considered the rich young ruler. We can be pretty hard on this fellow, but let's be honest, how easy would it be to sell everything we owned if Jesus asked us? And why would Jesus ask so much from a person He sees through eyes of love? The answer must be that Jesus knows true freedom comes from total surrender. Jesus didn't hesitate to ask for extreme sacrifice from those He called, and it was because He loved them! The rich young ruler asked how to attain eternal life. Jesus gave him the secret - total surrender. Our Lord came from the other side of that sacrifice and knew the reality of an eternal dimension we can only imagine. So do that! Imagine eternity and Jesus' love for you. Sacrifice becomes easy...it becomes freedom!

**Prayer:** Jesus, continue to help me with a willingness to completely surrender to You. I trust that whatever You ask of me, it is because You love me. Help me to fully understand that any sacrifice You may ask of me is simply a doorway to true happiness and freedom.

## DAY 11

*“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ So he came down at once and welcomed Him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” (Luke 19:5-8)*

Zacchaeus was a “sinner” but he wanted to see Jesus. He was small in stature and was forced to climb a tree to see Him. What is most important in this story is that Jesus saw Zacchaeus! What was the result of this encounter with Jesus? Zacchaeus was willing to give - to give generously to the causes close to Jesus’ heart. A true encounter with Jesus makes sacrifice easy! Zacchaeus was generous because in that face-to-face moment with Jesus, there was no doubt. Everything was clear. A true encounter with Jesus builds our faith and enables us to trust Him. We clearly see that He will take care of every detail of our lives when we completely surrender to Him.

**Prayer:** Lord, let me see You! Let me see Your eyes of love and grace looking at me. For I know, that if I can see You, my faith will soar! My heart’s response will be generous because I will completely trust that You are in control.

## Day 12

*“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”  
(John 10:27-28)*

Today's Scripture screams of intimacy! And this intimacy is created within a two-way relationship: the sheep listen...the Shepherd knows them...the sheep follow. And then, there is this response from the Shepherd that is beautifully protective: they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. When we recognize that Jesus is our good, good Shepherd, we listen to His voice! We obey Him because when we listen, we recognize that no one knows us like Jesus. He knows us intimately - our past, our struggles, our wins and our losses, our fears, our hopes, our strengths and our weaknesses. God knows us. He holds us close and becomes our Divine protector! Listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

**Prayer:** Lord, speak to me, oh loving, protective Shepherd! I will listen - yes Lord, I will listen!

## Day 13

*“Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:10)*

Every Christian is called to be a faithful steward of the talents and time and resources God has blessed them with. Being a faithful steward is a personal calling – a word from the Lord. It is a calling that comes with your name attached to it. It is a calling that only you can make a decision about. You can ignore that calling completely. You can brush off that calling by responding only in minimal ways. Or, recognizing God’s claim over your life, you can wake up and listen for God’s own voice. There is a word from the Lord for you in this campaign. There is a God-given vision for our church in this campaign. “Speak to me Lord. I am your servant. I am listening to hear from You.”

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me not only to say Samuel’s prayer, “Speak, for your servant is listening,” but to listen for Your word, Lord, and to do Your word.

## Day 14

*“They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” (Matthew 14:16)*

*“There is a boy here with five loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many people?” (John 6:9)*

Jesus had been with the crowds all day, ministering to people’s needs. It was getting late – past suppertime. “Send the crowds away,” the disciples told Jesus. Let them go home and take care of themselves for a while. Surely you do not expect us to be responsible for all of their needs.

Jesus’ response was, and still is, clear. “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

Every miracle begins with a person – with a person making a gift of the best they can offer and asking Jesus to bless and to use that gift. Expect a miracle. The need may seem overwhelming. Your gift may appear to be inadequate to cover all of the need. But all Jesus asks is the best that you can offer. When you give the best that you can to Jesus, expect a miracle. Expect God’s grace to work in and through you - and in and through other people - to accomplish more than you ever imagined.

**Prayer:** Lord, with your blessing and Your grace, multiply my gifts to make more difference than I ever imagined.

## Day 15

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)*

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart.” (Matthew 22:37)*

We tend to grow uncomfortable when the church talks about money. Why? Are decisions about how we live and how we use those resources unimportant? Is our faith supposed to be separate from our finances?

Maybe we are uncomfortable with talk about money because that conversation is getting awfully close to the heart of our faith.

Look at a revealing count of New Testament words: • Believe, Believing - 275 times • Pray, Praying - 371 times • Love, loves, loving - 714 times • Giving or give - 2,162 times.

Jesus knew that our treasures and our hearts are inseparably linked. For Him, talking about treasure was to reach more completely for the full allegiance of people's hearts. Jesus knew that dealing with our treasures is one of those critical places where the rubber meets the road ... where the practicality of our faith is tested ... where what we believe becomes tangible and real.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to love You with all my heart – and with all my life.

## Day 16

*“Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned.” (Mark 12:43)*

*“Love the Lord your God ... with all your strength.” (Matthew 22:37)*

Jesus turns the tables on the obvious, teaching his disciples an important principle of giving. Giving is not measured by dollar amounts; giving is measured by how much we truly give of ourselves. Some who gave large sums offered out of their surplus gifts that they would never even miss. But what this widow offered meant the world to her, although it was just a penny. Her gift affected her life. Her seemingly small gift is the one Jesus singles out for praise. She put in more of herself than all of the others.

Commitments are not about equal gifts, but about an equal sense of sacrifice.

**Prayer:** Lord, each and every gift makes a difference to my church. Teach me to give in ways that actually make a difference in my life.

## Day 17

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

Abraham had to wait 25 years before the promised son was born. By then he was 100 years old: his wife, Sarah, was 90. Yet God overruled the laws of nature to allow the birth of a child to an elderly, barren couple. They named their son Isaac, meaning “laughter,” for he brought unspeakable joy to them.

After Isaac had grown into young manhood, the word of God came once again to Abraham. He commanded: “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah.” The messenger continued, “Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” (Genesis 22:2, NIV)

Still believing, Abraham obeyed the voice of God and took his boy on that long, agonizing trip to the bleak slopes of Moriah. Though he did not comprehend God’s purpose, Abraham’s faith was not shaken. He complied with the instructions, placing his dear son on the altar and raising a knife to plunge into the young man’s chest. In the act of lifting the knife to slay his son, God stopped him. He commanded Abraham to kill instead a ram caught in a nearby bush.

**Prayer:** God give us faith like Abraham and a desire to obey as he did.

## Day 18

*“Offer yourselves as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is.” (Romans 12:1) “Love the Lord your God ... with all of your mind.” (Matthew 22:37)*

A magazine ran a series of articles asking people "How has your mind changed?" Some people answered by telling how a relationship changed their racial prejudices, or by sharing how some tragedy or suffering made them more aware of and compassionate toward others.

What can change your mind? That is an interesting question. Changing one's mind is a difficult and rare thing - especially if the transformation means changing our directions, our opinions, our goals, and our plans. Yet such change is exactly what Paul calls every Christian to. He calls us to be completely transformed by the renewing of our mind. And he calls us to give ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice.

Would anyone notice that your life is molded by the mind of Christ? Could anyone see your transformation? How has your life in faith changed your mind? How have your priorities changed? How has your life changed? Are you still conformed to this world, or are you being transformed? Could anyone notice the difference in you as you offer yourself more fully to God?

**Prayer:** Lord, lead me to see things differently, to think differently, to live differently. Reset my priorities. Transform my mind ... and my life.

## Day 19

*“Come, for everything is ready now. But they all alike began to make excuses.”  
(Luke 14:17-18)*

How many reasons are there for not participating in a capital campaign? The possibilities are endless! There are more than enough reasons to justify anyone.

A modern parable might begin like this:

The kingdom of God is like a capital campaign. God gave His people a vision. “Come!” said God, “Take your place prepared for you. Take up your part in My work. Everything is ready now. All of you are invited to make a difference. When you take your place and take up your part, all will be blessed to break bread in My kingdom.” But they all alike began to make excuses.

The most important piece of a jigsaw puzzle is the piece that is missing. Every part is important to making the whole picture work.

Your participation in the mission of The Church Without Walls is unquestionably significant. No one can play your part but you. No one can give your part but you. Others can only do their part. No one can make up for your part if your gift is excused.

**Prayer:** Lord, when Your call challenges me, it is easy for me to excuse myself. Reach me! Compel me to respond to Your call.

## Day 20

*“They gave themselves first to the Lord, and, by the will of God, then to us.”  
(2 Corinthians 8:5)*

Too often we think of giving to the church as a financial decision rather than as a stewardship decision. As a result, we may make a donation to the church, but we do not make a stewardship commitment.

In 2 Corinthians 8:5, Paul says of the Macedonian church, “they gave of themselves first to Lord, and then to us in keeping with God's will.” Making a stewardship decision means responding to a deeper calling of faith.

A stewardship decision is first and foremost a faith commitment, not a financial calculation.

First, they gave themselves to the Lord. This is the place to begin a conversation about a stewardship decision.

**Prayer:** Lord, first let me give myself more fully to You. Then let my decisions grow out of what I believe ... and out of what You call me to be and to do.

## Day 21

*“This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9-10)*

Are you still intent on making a stewardship decision? When you have decided to make your decision a matter of faith, then the next step is to seek God's will. “They gave themselves first to the Lord, and, by the will of God, then to us.” (2 Corinthians 8:5)

Seeking God's will means getting God involved in your decisions and in your life! Seeking God's will means inviting God's input and guidance. It means genuinely asking, “What would You do through me, Lord, to make Your will happen at The Church Without Walls?”

Where does one ask for God's guidance and seek God's will? How does one invite God to participate in his or her life? Those things happen as we intentionally spend time in prayer.

A stewardship decision is a prayerful commitment. A stewardship decision invites God to the dialogue and involves God in the discussion. A stewardship decision becomes much more than just my sense of goodwill... it means discovering and acting within a sense of God's goodwill.

**Prayer:** Lord, I want to honor Your name. Speak to me! Let Your will be done ... in me and through me. Let Your kingdom come ... here in my life.

## Day 22

*“Now as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in the love we inspired in you – see that you abound in this gracious work of giving also. I am not speaking this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love.” (2 Corinthians 8:7-8)*

Praxis is the point where our faith and our actions intersect. Praxis is the point where what we believe and what we do join together. To put it simply, praxis means walking the walk as well as talking the talk!

Now that we have made a faith commitment, and now that we have earnestly sought God's will in prayer, it is time to turn what we have learned into what we can do and will do.

Now is the time to take inventory. Now is the time to ask another question: “Lord, what have You equipped me and blessed me to do?” What resources do I have to give? How can I think creatively about giving - beyond the narrow box of my income and expenses - in order to give of myself fully? Are there assets beyond my monthly income that I can give? Can I create new resources to give with my talents, gifts, and time? Does my faith commitment lead me to change other priorities in my life, reducing spending and thus freeing resources for giving?

**Prayer:** Lord, I have heard Your word. Help me to be a doer of Your word.

## Day 23

*"I will not offer a sacrifice to the Lord my God that costs me nothing."  
(2 Samuel 24:24)*

**Finally we are getting close to being ready to fill out a pledge card.** But this gift has become something more than a donation! We have first given ourselves to the Lord. We have prayed for God's will to be done in our lives. We have looked hard at our resources in order to find every way to make our faith real with our gifts. This gift has become a stewardship decision that re-shapes your life – you are growing in your discipleship!

Any gift will make some difference to the church, but a stewardship decision is a gift that makes a difference in you. Through this gift God is actually growing your faith and your commitment.

Such a gift will certainly cost you something. King David had an opportunity to make an easy "sacrifice" (or offering) to God. Araunah was going to give him the whole deal – the threshing floor (the place for the altar), the oxen, and even the wood for the sacrifice – for nothing. What a deal! But David realized that such a deal was really no sacrifice for himself at all, no worship that honored his Lord and God. "I will not offer a sacrifice to the Lord my God which costs me nothing," David said.

Offering yourself to God – giving sacrificially – does not come easy. It will cost you something.

**Prayer:** Lord, if I give myself in ways that mean little to me, how would that honor and worship You? Let my giving honor You as my Lord and my God.

## Day 24

*“Every branch that bears fruit (God) prunes to make it bear more fruit.” (John 15:2)*

How can I find ways to give? Maybe I need to cut back in some overgrown areas of my life in order to bear better fruit in my life for God’s kingdom.

If you have ever grown grapes in your yard, then you will know that grapevines will naturally overextend themselves with prolific branching and leaf growth every year. If grapevines are not pruned, all of the branching and leaf growth can completely cover an arbor in as little as two growing seasons.

Such overgrown grapevines will bear tiny, unusable fruit – if it is able to bear fruit clusters at all. The extensive branching and leafing drains the resources and energy of the vine from its primary purpose – bearing fruit.

Look at the pictures of a well-kept vineyard whose purpose is to bear good fruit. You will see thick, decades old grapevines pruned back to no more than four short branches so that all the energy of the plant is focused on growing great grapes. Pruning – heavy, regular pruning - is necessary to bearing good fruit.

How overextended is your life? Ask yourself, “Where could I cut back so I could invest the time and energy and resources available to me into bearing the kind of good fruit in my life that matters?”

**Prayer:** Lord, abide more fully in me. Help me to prune and manage my life better. Reshape my living to bear good fruit that would glorify You.

## Day 25

*The owners said, "Why are you untying the donkey?" (The disciples) said, "The Lord has need of it." (Luke 19:33-34)*

I already give to the church. How can I find ways to give more? Proverbs 3:9 encourages the faithful to "honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce." Your weekly or monthly income stream (your "produce") may not be the only resource in your life to make a gift from.

Like the owners in Luke's gospel that provided Jesus with a way into the city of Jerusalem, these people had a donkey -- and the Lord had need of it. Maybe it is time to untie your donkey, to free some of your substance and bring it.

Why should people give things that they enjoy and own that have real value to them? It is simple. The Lord had need of it. What they are giving to meant far more to them than what they were giving up.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to see how much I have been blessed with in my life – and to see how things may bring a whole new sense of blessing as a gift.

## Day 26

*“There was a man named Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”).” (Acts 4:36)*

The name “Joseph” is such a fine name. In Hebrew, the name means “God’s added blessing.” This was the name for the cherished son of the patriarch Jacob. This was the name for Jesus’ earthly father. So why would the apostles give Joseph of Cypress a nickname like “Barnabas?”

Barnabas, Acts makes note to tell us, means “son of Encouragement”. Apparently, this Joseph was such an encourager that a new name was in order. When the early church needed money to underwrite its ministries, Joseph sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles. When Saul of Tarsus (renamed Paul) needed a friend to welcome him into the church he once persecuted, it was this Joseph who was that friend who nurtured Paul into a ministry of his own. When the church needed to send someone to encourage the new believers among the gentiles, they sent this Joseph. When young Mark needed someone to believe in him and to give him a second chance to serve as a missionary, Joseph encouraged him. Any wonder that all of Joseph’s friends called him Barnabas – “son of encouragement”?

Your gift makes a difference to the church, but so do your faith, your story, and your passion. Be a Barnabas! Look for ways to encourage the faith of others by sharing your witness, your passion, your faith. In doing so you multiply God’s grace and influence the faithful response of others.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to feel so joyful about what I am doing to make a difference in your kingdom that I can be a witness and encouragement to others.

## Day 27

*“The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must increase, and I must decrease.” (John 3:29-30)*

Have you discovered this truth yet? Most of us think that joy increases as we increase – as our wealth and our prestige, our influence and our power increase. But in fact, just the opposite is true. Lasting joy is not found at the top of the corporate mountain or at the pinnacle of power. Joy is not a reward of accomplishment. True joy is found where John the Baptist found it – by finding one’s place in relationship to Jesus Christ.

Are you ready to find joy complete? He (Jesus) must continue to increase in significance and Lordship of your life.

**Prayer:** Lord, lead me to find joy and abundant living as I give my life more fully to You.

## Day 28

*But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me." (Mark 14:6)*

Can you picture the scene? This was a tense setting. Word was that the authorities were looking for ways to arrest Jesus. This was a place for serious conversation and for invited guests only.

And then came this woman with the perfume. Who invited her? And who gave her permission to pour the entire contents of a perfume jar on the head of the guest of honor? Why waste so much expensive perfume? As some said, it could have been sold -- and the money could have been given to the poor.

Perhaps she had experienced the forgiveness of Jesus and felt so grateful for him that she had to find some way to bless Him. Whatever the reasons, Jesus defended her heart, and her lavish gift.

Very soon Jesus was stripped of His friends, His dignity, and His clothing as He was nailed to a cross. That dark day the only thing His tormentors could not get off of Him was the smell of that perfume on His head. As Jesus struggled to draw painful breaths upon the cross, did the sweet smell of that loving gift strengthen Him to be broken and poured out for us all?

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the grace to give to You as lavishly as You have poured Yourself out for me. Let me bless You, even as You have blessed my life.

## Day 29

*“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

A capital campaign ... above and beyond tithes and offering ... sacrificial giving! Someone will describe such capital campaign giving in this way: “I know what that means ... it means give until it hurts!”

Give until it hurts? Making a sacrifice actually means giving up something of meaningful value to you in order to give to something that means even more to you. It is giving something you care about to something you love even more. The lasting effect of such giving should not be “hurt,” but rather the joy discovered in giving yourself to those things that are most important to you.

Give until it hurts? Try giving until you discover some joy. The joy of making a difference in a God-given calling. The joy of aligning your life with God’s grace and will. The joy of a meaningfully and purposefully committed life. The joy of doing your part along with a whole congregation of faithful people. The joy of helping to make miracles – large and small – happen. The joy of seeing people’s lives change because of seeds you planted and nurtured. The joy of glorifying God. Indeed, as Paul says to the church in Corinth, “you will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:11)

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me greater joy and abundant thanksgiving in a meaningful, purposeful, committed life.

## Day 30

*“For you know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.”  
(2 Corinthians 8:9)*

There it is – the reason for, the model for, the example for our giving – in the grace and the sacrifice of Christ himself.

The most familiar, and perhaps most important, words in the New Testament are found in John 3:16. “For God so loved ... He gave ... His only Son ... that everyone who believes in Him ... might have eternal life.”

God so loved ... you ... that He gave ... His Son ... that you ... might have eternal life. Now each of us knows what “sacrificial giving” truly means. In God’s heart, you were worth it.

Has The Church Without Walls blessed and shaped and changed your life? Maybe you have never been a part of a capital campaign in this congregation. If that is true, then this church exists with the tools and the facilities to serve you in Christ’s name only because of the sacrifice and the gifts of others. For them, you were worth it.

Maybe you have been a part of this church for a long time. Maybe you have made sacrifices before so that this church could minister to people in Christ name. If so, then you have seen the lives of many people change because of what you have given. Was it worth what you have given? You know it was worth it – and you know that this new commitment will be translated into stories of faith that you can scarcely imagine. You know it will be worth it.

God gave ... other people of faith have given ... **now it is time for your faithful, hopeful, joyful response.** “Now finish doing this, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has.” (2 Corinthians 8:11-12)

**Prayer: Thank you Lord for the inexpressible grace You have given to me. Bless my Pledge to “Our Journey” Capital Stewardship Campaign and use my pledge to bless others in Your name.**

