



THE **FUTURE**
now



The Future Now
Grace First Baptist Church

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THE HISTORY

OF GRACE FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH



June 1975

The late Rev. Linwood F. Russ formed Grace First Baptist Church with his wife and two children. Six visitors united with the church during the first public service and the church was grown to 83 members by the end of the first year.



June 1976

Construction of a church began on land purchased the previous year. Upon completion, 118 members moved into the new church. The following summer the structure was extended to include a fellowship hall.



June 1987

Following the death of Pastor Russ, Rev. Aaron Brasfield Jr. was installed as pastor of Grace. Membership continued to grow. Additional land was purchased and a new church was erected in 1988.



December 1997

Rev. Dr. Walter Starks was installed as pastor when Rev. Brasfield relocated to a Chicago-based church. Under Rev. Dr. Starks' leadership, Grace continued to successfully pursue its vision for growth & prosperity.



May 2010

Rev. Allen Ford was installed as pastor proceeding the retirement of Rev. Dr. Starks. Under Rev. Ford's leadership the L.F. Russ Multi-Purpose Center was completed, ministries expanded and global missions increased.



The Future Now

Grace currently exceeds 900 members. The Future NOW will accommodate the growth of the church with special focus on the next generation and the church mission to "Build Strong Families Through the Word of God".

OUR MISSION

Building strong families through the Word of God, equipping people for the work of the ministry, to evangelize to the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Acts 20:32 | Romans 15:1**

OUR BELIEFS

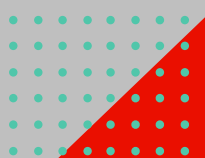
WE BELIEVE that the "Church," the body and espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age. *Eph 1:22-23; 5:25-27; 1 Cor 12:12-14; 2 Cor 12:12-14; 11:2.*

WE BELIEVE that the establishment and continuance of local "Churches" is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament scriptures. *Acts 14:27; 20:32; 28:17; 1 Tim 3:1, 13; Titus 1:5-11*

WE BELIEVE that a "Church" is a congregation of baptized believers associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, that its officers are ordained Pastors or Elders, and Deacons, whose qualification, claims, and duties are clearly defined in scriptures. *Acts 2:44, 47*

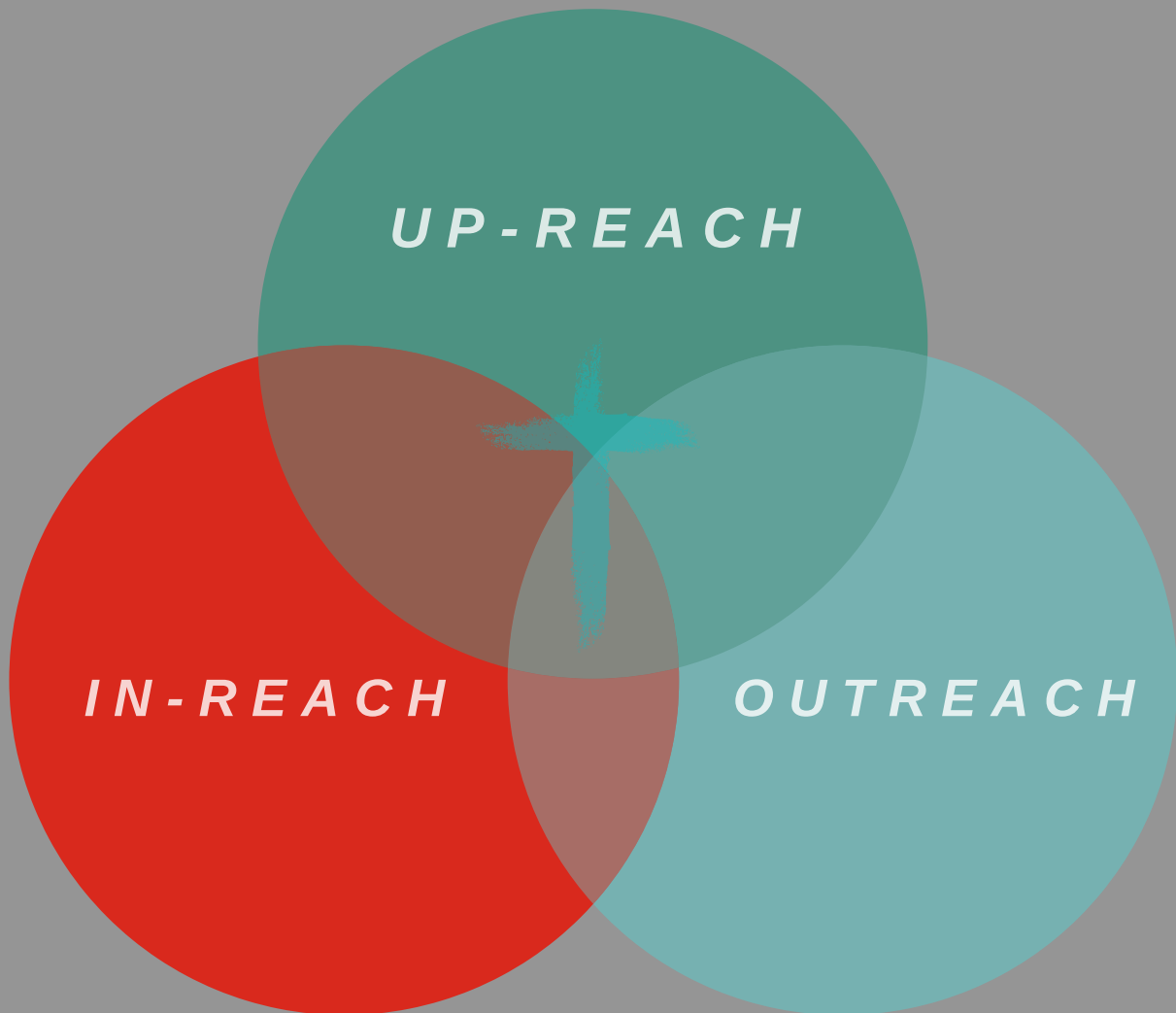
WE BELIEVE that the local "Church" has the absolute right of Self-government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organization. *Col 1:18*

WE BELIEVE that the "church" is the sole and only judge of measure and method of its cooperation on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and benevolence.



CONNECTING PEOPLE

Acts 2: 42 - 47



Our Vision

To worship God through prayer, praise, proclamation of the Gospel, and service.

A Message from the Pastor



King David declared, "**I will not sacrifice unto the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.**" 2 Samuel 24:24.

You see, King David knew that the greater the gift's value and significance to the giver, the greater its worth before the Heavenly Father.

The Future NOW initiative will allow us, the givers, - an opportunity for some and a challenge for others - to invest in the future of our youth; not by equal giving, but by equal sacrifice.

San Antonio tops the list of fastest-growing cities in the U.S., with 66 people relocating to the city daily. Youth make up over 25% of our city's 1.5-million population.

At Grace First Baptist Church alone, our young membership has grown

over 61% in the past five years. Thus, it is imperative that we begin to prepare for their future now.

Enclosed you will find additional information about **The Future NOW**. With a fiscal goal of \$8 million, we are praying for 100% member participation. Your stewardship will help us to empower our youth to radically pursue what God has in store for them.

As you review the content of this campaign, please prayerfully consider how God would have you actively participate in **The Future NOW** as we, a church family, embark upon this spiritual journey at Grace First Baptist Church.

Regards -

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen M. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Allen M. Ford, Pastor



OUR PURPOSE

THE FUTURE NOW

The Future NOW initiative is a structured plan to prepare a place for our future generation. Grace First Baptist Church is committed to ensuring that our members grow in their walk with Christ. Our goal is to construct a facility primarily for the use of our children's ministry. The building will also be equipped with classrooms, offices, and meeting space that will allow our church to better serve our younger members; a group that has consistently increased in number (61%) over the past five years at Grace First Baptist Church.



30,000 SQUARE FEET

Children's Church
Classrooms
Senior Meeting Space
Office Space
Youth Church
Book Store & Library
Food Pantry
Memorial Wall
Fully Equipped Exercise Room
Young Adult Meeting Area

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

To fulfill the church's new vision, we are launching **The Future NOW**. This initiative is driven by the church's desire to prepare a place for the next generation. The youth today are opting out of establishing a relationship with Christ, and instead turning to alternate places for acceptance and instruction. That is why placing emphasis on building a foundation for the youth is one of the most compelling reasons to join this movement.

There is the temptation to give in such a way that makes minimal impact on how we live. **The Future NOW** will rely on church members giving over and above their current level of giving; in many cases requiring that we give up some things in one area in order to give more in other areas. The best path to increased giving is the spiritual path, where we set our hearts on things above. Financial priorities then begin to take shape from the spiritual priorities.

One way of defining this is lifestyle stewardship. The challenge of lifestyle stewardship is to give boldly and prayerfully. Lifestyle stewardship is a level of giving that affects us, our plans, our activities, our attitudes, and our overall approach to life - our giving must touch our living! Many have been amazed at how much more they could give after journeying through this process.

The best investment anyone can make to build the Kingdom of God is to give your time, talent and temple to God - ALL of you! Generosity is an action from the heart - one to release and one to receive. This action is not for our own gratification but that others will see Christ in us, our spiritual growth, and maturity. Our desire is that God will receive all of the glory and honor! **The Future NOW** gives us the opportunity to invest in the future generations - Millennial and beyond. What we give today by way of our time, talent, treasures and testimonies will go a long way showing how much we love God and our willingness to obey His Word by loving, providing and investing in others.

THE BIBLE

ON MONEY & DEBT

Hebrews 13:5

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with that you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This is too meaningless.

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Proverbs 22:7

...the borrower is slave to the lender.

Matthew 6:31-33

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

WHAT'S IN STORE

THE FUTURE NOW



The family life center will be erected in the vacant lot next to the Linwood F. Russ Multi-Purpose Center. The facility will help us to better serve our children and youth ministries; an ever-growing population.



The addition of staff offices, library, senior and young adult meeting space will allow for continued growth within the church. Outreach opportunities will be better served with the addition of a designated food pantry.



Capital projects - asset beautification, preservation and improvements - will continue as planned.

Some upcoming projects include:

- pavement resurfacing
- replacement of church pews in main sanctuary
- garage to house church bus and vans



Additional parking with designated visitor spaces will be added to accommodate the growing membership. Four designated parking lots will be named after the founding and preceding pastors of Grace First Baptist Church.

GIVING LEVELS

THE FUTURE NOW

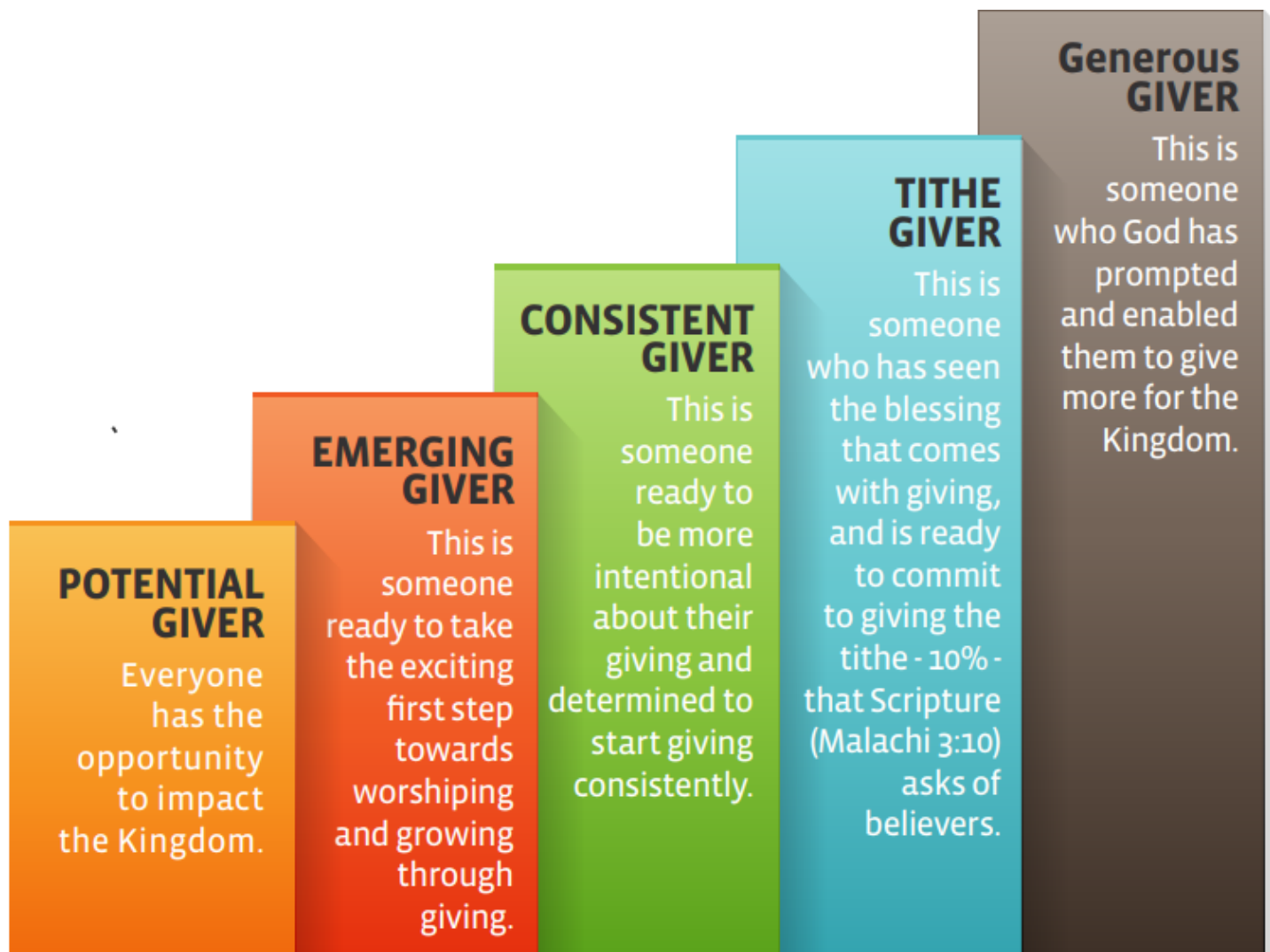
Before beginning any journey we must identify two things:
where we are now and where we desire to go.

The Giving Levels graphic is our guide to increased giving.

Greater giving happens one step at a time, like building blocks.

As we pray and discern how God would ask us to invest in

The Future NOW, let's ask God to inspire and challenge
us towards a life of greater giving.



PARTICIPATION MODEL

THE FUTURE NOW



The \$8M facility will prayerfully be realized through the combined generosity of the church members via increased weekly giving, endowments/donations, and/or the memorial wall; coupled with the church's current monetary assets and bank financing.



The Future NOW will require your obedience and sacrificial generosity to God's mission at Grace First Baptist Church. The success of the initiative relies upon the members' commitment to giving a minimum of \$5-\$10 more weekly; above and beyond your current level of giving.



Oftentimes, members receive periodic salary increases, bonuses or unexpected monies. Lump sum endowments/donations committed to The Future Now help plant the seeds that will bloom in eternity for the future generations.



Commit to The Future NOW by investing in a plaque for a loved one or for yourself to be included in the beautiful memorial wall to adorn the entrance to the new facility.

Platinum - \$1000 Gold - \$750
Silver - \$500 Bronze - \$250

COMMITMENT CARD

THE FUTURE NOW

You will receive your commitment card during the sermon series. We ask that you pray about your commitment to the campaign for the next several weeks. Please complete the card and return it during the commitment Sunday celebration. This will be a special time as the entire Grace First Baptist Church family unites for **The Future NOW**.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Total Commitment Amount: \$ _____

I / We plan to give accordingly:

- \$ _____ annually for 3 years
- \$ _____ monthly for 36 months (three years)
- \$ _____ bi-weekly for 72 weeks (three years)
- \$ _____ weekly for 156 weeks (three years)
- \$ _____ one-time commitment

Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

THE FUTURE NOW

What are you asking me to do?

First and foremost we are asking that you pray and seek God's leading on what He is asking of you. Prepare your heart to hear Him, and then listen to what He says.

Make time to engage in personal reflection with God. Talk with your spouse and family about what this commitment will mean for this next exciting season of your life. We are asking that you make a sacrificial commitment to generosity. Whatever it is that God leads you to do, follow His leading. We are trusting that The Future NOW will be a defining moment for our church and for our faith.

How long is the commitment and what does it entail?

We are asking that everyone make a three-year commitment, totaling 36 months. We believe that everybody has the ability to give something. As a church we are striving for 100% participation and we ask that each member give an additional \$5-\$10 weekly above and beyond your regular giving. Some may wish to commit to a lump sum endowment or donation. Others may want to contribute by way of the memorial wall to adorn the entrance of the new facility.

Will updates regarding the building project be provided?

Yes, routine updates will be provided as the project progresses.
This information will be available at gracefbc.org.

I am not sure that I can make a commitment?

Going above and beyond in financial giving can be a challenge. We encourage you to fast, pray and study God's word to determine the appropriate level of giving for your household. The Future NOW is about your sacrificial generosity to God's mission at Grace. We believe that God calls us to action in times of hardship just as much as He does in times of abundance, and that looks different for every person. We believe God will use The Future NOW to bring about a heart change in many people as they surrender their lives completely over to God in the area of giving. This may mean that you are being challenged to trust God in faith by making a commitment that you don't quite know how to fulfill right now, but that you believe God will provide for as you seek to honor him.

What can I expect from God?

Too Many Blessings to Count!

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-5 (NLT)

Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

As we look back over last year, we cannot help but remember all of the good things God has done in our lives. Every day he has given us new blessings and new reasons to praise him. His love is unfailing and his forgiveness is immeasurable. Beginning this new season at Grace with a spirit of gratefulness is the best way to ensure that our focus is in the right place.

Reflection: Count Your Blessings

Praise God for all of the good things He does for us personally (Psalm 92; Isaiah 40:30-31)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

List some ways you have known God to bless you:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Prayer: *Lord we praise you for your goodness, for being a loving Father and for the blessings you provide each day. Great is your faithfulness. Lord, help us to live our lives with a grateful heart and to be a blessing to those around us. Amen.*



What can I expect from God?

He blesses us in order for us to have the capacity to give!

Scripture: Proverbs 11:24 (MSG)

The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.

Have you ever just looked around and started to take inventory of all of the things you have accumulated over the years? Most of us have a lot of stuff! In fact, sometimes we can go months and even years without using some of it, because we just have too much. Someone around us may be in need or could benefit from some of the extra stuff we have. Let us make a commitment this week to be generous by giving away something to someone else who we know could benefit from some of our stuff.

Reflection: Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Where is my money, time and talent going?

What am I giving to God?

Am I giving God my best or am I just giving God "something"?

What is my attitude toward giving?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a cheerful giver Help me to reflect on the generous gift you gave to mankind through Jesus' life and to become motivated to give myself and my things to others. Help me not to be a holy hoarder, but to give generously because you love a cheerful giver. Amen.

What can I expect from God?

God never overlooks our sacrifices!

Scripture: Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Have you ever had a desire to give, but was embarrassed because you could not give as much as someone else? Jesus teaches us that it is not the size of the gift that matters, but the sacrifice, itself. The widow did not have much to give, but she gave what she had and Jesus recognized her sacrifice. God is not calling us to compete in our giving with one another, but he does recognize when we are truly making a sacrifice to give.

Reflection: Read Mark 14:3-9

Compare the story of the widow and the story of the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. Who gave more? Explain.

What made each gift important?

How were the women alike in what they gave?

Prayer: *God, help me to not focus on the amount that I can give, but rather on the sacrifice that I make to give. Lord, you own everything I have. Help me to not hold on to it so tightly. You like a cheerful and generous giver. Lord, I know there are times when I give hesitantly or I am not as generous as I could be. I ask your forgiveness. Give me a heart of generosity. Help me to become a generous giver with my time, talent, and treasure. Amen.*



What does God expect from me?

He expects us to give in accordance with our own resources.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (NIV)

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

In this passage Paul is teaching the Corinthian church how to give. It is important to see that he instructs them to set aside a sum of money, which denotes that Paul is instructing them to make giving a priority. He goes on to say that the sum should be "in keeping with your income" which clearly says to them that they are not required to give based on another's income, just their own. I am grateful that God does not hold me to someone else's standard of living. He just asks me to give according to my own income. God knows what I can give, and all he wants me to do is to give it freely and cheerfully!

Reflection: Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Did the Macedonians have a lot to give?

Is giving just about money?

Do you believe it is a privilege or a burden to give? Explain.

Prayer: *God, there have been times in life where I have not given freely or generously. Sometimes I am worried about what the person or organization will do with the money. Help me to trust you when I give. God remove the feelings of angst that come when I am asked to give. I do not want to be stingy when it comes to your kingdom. Lord, there are people all around me who need me to be generous with my time, talent, and treasure. Help me to see them and give me the courage to respond with compassion and generosity as you use me to meet their needs. God, I want to join you in your work. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.*



What does God expect from me?

He wants us to be responsible with our blessings.

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-15 (NIV)

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey,

Have you ever wondered why God chooses to give some people a lot of talents and resources, and others only a few? In this parable, Jesus is talking about the owner who gave his servants various amounts of gold. Notice, the owner gave them each "according to his ability". The owner knew how much each of his servants could handle. Jesus's words are instructive for us because he knows how much we can handle. We are not able to tell Jesus how much he should give us, but we can use what he gives us for his glory.

Reflection: Read Matthew 25:16-30

Can God trust you with what he gives you?

Which servant in the parable most resembles you and why?

How does knowing that God will hold you accountable for how you manage your time, talent, and treasure change your perspective on giving?

Prayer: *God, thank you for choosing to bless me. I know that sometimes I take your blessings for granted, and I am not always grateful for how you have blessed me. Help me to resist the temptation to compare what I have with what others have. Show me how to use what you have given me to be a blessing to others. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.*



What is the next step?

First things first!

Scripture: Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Jesus made a promise that if I place His Kingdom first, I will not have to worry about anything. What does it mean to place God's Kingdom first? I place God's Kingdom first when I love God and others with all my heart, mind, and soul. I place the Kingdom first when I am concerned about the poor, the orphans, and the widows in my community. I place the Kingdom first when I choose to live by God's provisions. Today, place first things first.

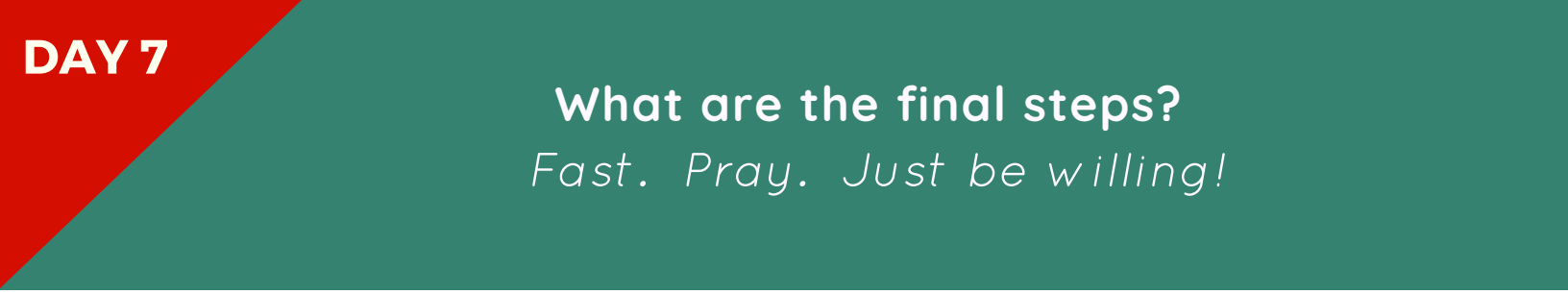
Reflection: Read Matthew 6:28-33

What role does faith play in putting first things first?

What examples are provided in this passage to show you that God will take care of you?

How can you place the Kingdom of God first in 2019 with your time, talent, and treasure?

Prayer: *Father, I desire to put first things first. I want to give you more of me in 2019. Everything I have belongs to you. Help me to use my time, talent, and treasure for your Kingdom. Father, convict me when I stray away from putting you first. Lord, take control of every area of my life so that I may honor you in all things. Amen.*



What are the final steps? *Fast. Pray. Just be willing!*

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:11-12 (NLT)

Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

Paul encourages the Christ followers in Corinth to give according to what they have with joy! Paul calls them to live out this act of generosity by: 1) finishing what they started 2) allowing their enthusiasm to result in action, and 3) giving with the proper posture and attitude. Our gifts are acceptable to God when we give with a generous heart and when we give within our ability.

Reflection: Read 21 Corinthians 8:1-9

How does the passage describe the financial situation of the Macedonian churches?

What can you learn from their example?

What do you need to do to become a generous giver?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a committed follower who stays committed until the end. Give me the proper attitude and posture to honor you in my giving. Make me a cheerful giver. Father, reveal the areas where I may have fallen short, and renew my resolve to serve you better. Amen.

FASTING 101

THE FUTURE NOW

Fasting is to deny myself food for spiritual purposes. It is a spiritual discipline that allows one to reset and refocus on God by removing things we normally enjoy. The information enclosed is based on the Daniel fast, which is vegetarian-based.

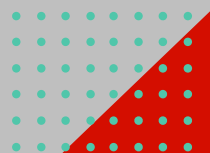
- Fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.
- Fasting does not have to be specifically food, but the denial of any legitimate desire for spiritual purposes.
- Scripture describes the fasting of numerous individuals including Jesus (Matthew 4:2), Daniel (Daniel 1:12), John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4) and Esther (Esther 4:16).

FASTING TIPS

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water daily throughout the fast. It is very important to stay hydrated.!
- Anyone with a medical condition related to eating or under the treatment of a physician must consult their doctor before proceeding.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- **Side effects:** You may experience moderate to severe headaches for the first day or two as your body rids itself of caffeine, salt, sugar, and various impurities. You may need to take Advil or aspirin. If your doctor has advised against Advil or aspirin, please contact your doctor for an alternative.
- **Important exceptions:** Use your discretion along with the advice of your physician and prayer to modify the Daniel Fast to adhere to your medical needs. **Anyone with a medical condition related to eating or under the treatment of a physician must consult their doctor before proceeding.** Also, if you have extreme difficulty with the fast, such as an impairment of your ability to work at your job, you will have to make adjustments. Utilize wisdom. Seek the Lord and discuss it with other Christians involved in the fast, to find alternatives.



FOODS PERMITTED

THE FUTURE NOW

- **Whole Grains:** Brown Rice, Oats, Oatmeal, Barley and Pasta
- **Legumes:** Dried Beans, Pinto Beans, Split Peas, Lentils, Black Eyed Peas
- **Fruits:** Apples, Apricots, Bananas, Blackberries, Blueberries, Boysenberries, Cantaloupe, Cherries, Cranberries, Oranges, Figs, Grapefruit, Grapes, Guava, Honeydew Melon, Kiwi, Lemons, Limes, Mangoes, Nectarines, Papayas, Peaches, Pears, Pineapples, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Raspberries, Strawberries, Tangelos, Tangerines, Watermelon (Limit your intake to 2 citrus fruits per day i.e. lemons, limes, grapefruits and oranges)
- **Vegetables:** Artichokes, Asparagus, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Chili Peppers, Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Garlic, Ginger root, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Mushrooms, Mustard Greens, Okra, Onions, Parsley, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabagas, Scallions, Spinach, Sprouts, Squashes, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Yams, Zucchini, Collard greens, Turnip greens.

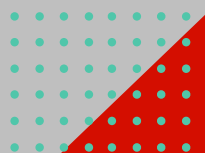
NOTE: Vegetables, such as potatoes, beans, and soybeans will help provide substance. Fresh or frozen vegetables are recommended. If canned vegetables are desired, use sodium free or drain and wash prior to cooking. Individuals with an intolerance to beans should substitute with soy products. It is advisable to take a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement during the fast (1 per day). You may also include various nuts to serve as a protein supplement. Seeds, Nuts, Sprouts, Olive Oil, Seasonings, and Spices.

- **Liquids:** Spring Water, Distilled Water, 100% All-Natural Fruit Juices, 100% All Natural Vegetable Juices (apple juice, orange juice, grapefruit juice, cranberry juice, etc.) No sweetened drinks or sweetened fruit.

To maintain portion control, refer to the USDA Food Pyramid on for the recommended servings per day. For example, limit fruits or vegetables to 7-10 per day and nuts to 12-15 per meal (www.mypyramid.gov).

FOODS NOT PERMITTED:

- Sugar, sugar substitutes and sugar products, desserts, etc.
- Table or box salt • Caffeinated drinks (coffee, soft drinks, tea, etc.)
- Bread, enriched grains, and rice • Meats, fish, poultry, dairy, eggs
- Fried foods • Margarine, shortening, high fat products



You have completed The Future Now Campaign and 7 days of fasting and praying! Take a few moments to journal what God has spoken to you in this time.



THE FUTURE
now

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