

G r o w i n g
D a i l y

Growing Daily

A Forty-Day Experience

Ray Martinez

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“Read so you can learn about the world.

Write so you can change the world!”¹⁹



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Preface

Growing Daily: a forty-day experience was an inspired thought that came during a lunch meeting with Dr. Luke. During our conversation I expressed how important it was for me not to go to bed without learning something new for the day. If I couldn't think of anything that I learned new, it wasn't unusual for me to look up a new word in the dictionary; I just couldn't rest without learning something new.

I love what David Neenan once said: "Power doesn't come from what we know—it comes from what we need to learn."¹ While Dr. Luke and I were talking, I mentioned that he had just helped me with the idea of creating a daily journal with inspirational thoughts and of publishing it as a devotional book. We should learn something new about Christ or the Bible daily, for daily living and growth. Imagine learning 365 new things about the Bible every year, multiplied by ten years!

My daily, personal insights are intended to share what I learned on my journey, with the thought that you might start your own "journal of journey." Before starting, I asked God to inspire me every day with a new thought, insight, or inspiration of what He wanted me to learn for the day. This is a forty-day journal, but I intend to continue with my journal as long as possible, God willing.

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Below are some Scripture references of God's number "forty":

Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.

—Genesis 7:4 (NIV)

The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

—Exodus 16:35 (NIV)

Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

—Exodus 24:18 (NIV)

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

—Exodus 34:28 (NIV)

At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

—Numbers 13:25 (NIV)

Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.

—Numbers 14:33, 34 (NIV)

Preface

The LORD's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

—Numbers 32:13 (NIV)

When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water.

—Deuteronomy 9:9 (NIV)

Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD's sight and so provoking him to anger.

—Deuteronomy 9:18 (NIV)

Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years.

—Judges 8:28 (NIV)

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

—Judges 13:1 (NIV)

David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.

—2 Samuel 5:4 (NIV)

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

—Matthew 4:2 (KJV)

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To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

—Acts 1:3 (KJV)

The list of scriptures could go on, but we know the number “forty” was relevant, just as three, seven, and twelve were. For me, the number forty was significant because it always indicated a period of completion.

Preface

My toolbox for daily living is short but instrumental for my walk:

- James 5:16 (KJV): “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent *prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (emphasis mine).

Keeping my life in right standing with God’s kind of life is insurance that my prayers will be answered. That assurance makes it much more comfortable for me to pray for others and develop friends that I can share my grief with.

- Nehemiah 8:10 (KJV): “Then he said unto them, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; *for the joy of the LORD is your strength*’” (emphasis mine).

If we can find happiness in what we are doing, it becomes strength for us.

- 2 Corinthians 12:10 (KJV): “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for *when I am weak, then am I strong*” (emphasis mine).

The weaker we are in our own strength, knowledge, and experience, the stronger we become in God’s power. Consequently, joy swells up in us.

- Philippians 4:7 (KJV): “And the *peace* of God, which *passeth all understanding*, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (emphasis mine).

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How fitting that the Word says God's peace (and not man's) will give us understanding. God will keep your hearts and minds through Christ, not some philosopher of religion or theorist. God can do it, because he is the designer of who we are yesterday, today, and forever. We don't have to be confused with the world's views or by any one person who has his or her own ideology of life. We only need to go to the source.

Day 1



June 4, 2009

Love your enemies



Many times I learn more about the Word of God by talking about the Scriptures with someone. During those key conversations, God inspires me to receive the correct interpretation of

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what he meant, particularly for me and whoever I am talking with.

Today, my discussion with Luke over lunch centered on the great scriptures that say we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Matthew 5:44, 47–48 (KJV) says, “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

In the same way, Luke 6:27, 28 (NIV) states, “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Also, Luke 6:35 (NIV) says, “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

God doesn’t intend for us to regurgitate bad thoughts about those who have offended us or betrayed us over some business transaction. Too often we harbor ugly thoughts of what people may have done to us or what we think they did intentionally. (I must confess I’ve offended people without even knowing it.)

God’s direction is that when we think of those enemies or offenders, we avoid the thoughts of what they did to us, our family, or friends, and instead quickly revert to a prayer for them. The prayer will take your mind off of the evil sensation of “getting even” to a pure thought about Christ and letting him deal with the matter instead of you.

Day 2



June 5, 2009

God's strength versus man's



Lloyd Garcia receives the Key to the City from Mayor Ray Martinez
for being in the U.S. Olympics for weight lifting.

Jesus tells Peter to “put your sword back in its place...
for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew
26:52 (NIV)). What a powerful statement! For me, this says that

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before you even strike, put your bad thoughts away—do away with your intentions and you won't act out.

I am left with the conviction that we must control our thoughts, because if we do not, we will be held accountable—for what we have done or for the impending action before we committed the act of transgression. Even though Peter already had struck off the ear of Malchus (John 18:10), you will read in Luke 22:51 how Jesus restored his ear, just as Jesus wants to restore us from the things we are harmed by or from what we have done wrong. He forgives us as long as we forgive (Matthew 6:14).

In John 18:10 (KJV), we read how Jesus tells Peter that he cannot change what God has planned when he says, “the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—why do we try to change the ways of God?

What I just shared were transcending thoughts I had while I was waiting at Denver International Airport for a flight to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to visit family. Pondering this idea of what Peter was trying to accomplish was mind-boggling. In one sense, Peter clearly illustrated to us that walking in your own strength with God, without the carnal world's ideas or concepts, was much more effective. God's authority surpasses our own strength and our own *man-made* sword to chop another person's ear off. Our strength comes from the joy of the Lord. Nehemiah 8:10 (KJV) says, “Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Some other great paralleling verses are:

- 1 Corinthians 1:25 (KJV): “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; *and the weakness of God is stronger than men*” (emphasis mine).

God's strength versus man's

- Philippians 4:13 (KJV): "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (emphasis mine).
- Ephesians 3:16 (KJV): "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, *to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*" (emphasis mine).
- Colossians 1:11 (KJV): "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power*, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (emphasis mine).
- 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (KJV): "But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (emphasis mine).

Acts 13:50–52 tells the story of how Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city for preaching. In protest, and to make a statement, they shook the dust from their feet and they walked away in the joy of the Lord—they walked off with more strength than what they initially came with. The joy of the Lord was their strength; and he is our strength too, if we will yield to him and not draw our own weapons, even if it is our tongue.

Day 3



June 6, 2009

Being Consistent



Coach Sonny Lubick of the CSU Football team knows all about being consistent—first coach to make CSU a winning team in the university’s history.

“We need to be consistent” was the poignant thought that my cousin Jay stated during our family breakfast in Montezuma, New Mexico. While talking about a person’s golf game and how it changes so often from one game day to another, he noted

Being Consistent

that no matter how much you practice golf, you have to play the actual game regularly in order to be consistent with what you practice or train to do. Preparation has no meaning if you cannot execute.

It dawned on me that my practice had to be employed, not someone else's expertise. We can listen to experts all day long, but if we don't apply the taught skills, what use are they?

Exodus 23:24 (KJV) states, "You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their work; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars." Clearly, God is teaching his people what they must do, and if they obey him, he is willing to send His angels before them to beat their adversaries.

In Leviticus 18:3 (NIV), the people are taught that "you must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices."

In the Psalms, we learn that obeying is a practice, or to be persistent or constantly obeying with consistence. Psalm 119:56 (LVB) says, "What a blessing this has been to me—to constantly obey."

We are taught in Matthew 7:24 that whoever hears these words and puts them into practice is wise. And Matthew 23:3 teaches us to *practice what you preach*.

Acts 19:19 helps us to understand that we should *do what you believe* and get rid of the bad habits publicly—by public confession of your faith. Commit to making a public display of your character. We cannot live a double life any more than we can say, *I practice golf well*, when we seldom play golf and can't even play the actual game.

Romans 12:13 (NLT) encourages us to practice hospitality, or consistently be hospitable to all people, not exclusively to those who are influential, but to those who are without much as well. "When God's children are in need, be the one to

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help them out. And *get into the habit* of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night” (emphasis mine).

For us to succeed, we must be consistent about repeatedly doing what we are taught so that we are unfailing, reliable, dependable, unswerving, and in harmony with our cognitive learning and our actual application.

Day 4



June 7, 2009

Mini-prayers



Photograph placed inside the Pentagon in Washington, DC.

While taking my daily jog, I was caught up in *mini-prayers* about many topics for those whom I was visiting for the weekend, for my return travel, for people I haven't thought about for years, and for those I may have offended in some way or another. I was praying for those who don't like me, not even knowing why. I must have instantaneously prayed fifty or more prayers during my forty-minute run!

When I returned home the same evening, I found a unique scripture: Romans 12:12 (KJV), which says, "Rejoicing in hope;

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patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer...” Even though the word “instant” has more relevant meaning (i.e., be constantly diligent, tirelessly, attentively, constantly, unremittingly, continuously, persistently, with vigor, or to adhere closely to), I couldn’t help but focus on the phrase that we should be “instant in prayer.”

It was an impressive thought for me to share: Whatever comes across your minds during your time of prayer, then do pray for it. Don’t let the small thoughts drift away from your memory—they came through your mind for a reason. We are assured that our prayers will be answered or fulfilled in Matthew 21:22 (KJV), which says, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Mini-prayers are many prayers that have far-reaching tentacles into many lives.

In 2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV), Paul writes to Timothy stating: “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season...” This verse ties into Romans 12:12, for both passages are stressing to be ready to do your part, whether that is praying for someone or being ready to share your testimony or an insightful thought that will help that brother or sister.

I am always amazed at how much more I grow and learn when I am talking and sharing with others about my faith. For me, it’s almost like God’s formula for my life to grow in his knowledge. Peter talked and prayed about this very matter: 2 Peter 3:18 (KJV) says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

There is a side of me that believes our prayers are most effective when we are seeking God’s advice or asking him to help others while we are under physical pressure—not necessarily pressure with anxiety, but the type of weight we use to improve ourselves physically. Why not employ prayer with our workout for the day so that the mind, body, and spirit are all in harmony

Mini-prayers

with God? Not only does the time go by faster, but also we accomplish so much more when we make the three aspects of our lives into one—it helps me understand the Trinity with a lot more transparency.