

The 10-Day New Year's *Heart Challenge*

Written and compiled by Melody Mason
January 2019

(Note: This is my personal Heart Challenge to you as we start the New Year.
This is not part of the *10 Days of Prayer* that the World Church hosts each January,
but it is my hope that these Heart Challenges will prepare you for the *10 Days of Prayer*.)

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Dear Friends,

In this fast paced world, life sometimes has a way of running away from us. Have you noticed that? We get so busy, so preoccupied, so distracted with so many things (and yes, even good things) that we sometimes lose sight of the BEST THING—Jesus! Oh, it's not like we've *really* forgotten Him. We are still going through the motions—reading our Bible, saying our quick prayers, and doing the best we can to serve Him—but often we are more like Martha than Mary, and we wonder why we barely stay afloat!

If you are feeling a little spiritually weary, if you are feeling a little dry, or if you are just longing for fresh vibrancy in your walk with God, what better way to re-energize your spiritual walk than by taking a few days to fast and pray as we begin this New Year. That doesn't mean your life has to come to a complete halt. But there are things you can do, distractions you can put aside for a few days, as you intentionally seek Christ in a deeper way. Maybe it's canceling some appointments, turning off the T.V., stepping away from the news for a few days, logging out of your social media accounts, putting down your phone, or pushing the dessert plate (or some other foods) away. Maybe it's choosing to go with a little less sleep and getting up an hour earlier in the mornings. Whatever you choose to do, it might seem difficult at first, but it will be a small sacrifice compared to what you gain as you seek the Lord more intentionally.

Derek Morris, author of *The Radical Prayer*, once said: "We fast from the world so that we can feast on Jesus!" And that's the whole point! So, whether you choose to fast one day, seven days, 10 days, or 21 days, you will be infinitely blessed.

The following pages contain daily *Heart Challenges* that I've put together for us to reflect on as we take some time to fast and pray at the start of this New Year. These *Heart Challenges* are not comprehensive. There are so many more aspects of daily discipleship, spiritual growth and need that are not covered here. But perhaps these few thoughts will lead you to search for more on your own. I encourage you to use your Bible often as you follow the *Heart Challenges* each day. I will give you a number of specific passages to look up. You will find the most benefit if you actually look up and meditate on each verse. Just a warning though! The *Heart Challenge* questions may not all be easy. You might want some Kleenex nearby. But if God cuts, know that He only cuts to heal. He is the Master Surgeon. And if you feel like your toes are getting stepped on, know that my own toes were walked on first! Yes, venturing into deeper waters can be uncomfortable, but oh, what joy we experience when we follow God's leading. For added blessing, I encourage you to journal and write down the things God brings to your mind as you read and reflect. Above all, allow the Holy Spirit to lead you on this journey. And follow conviction with action!

Here's to a fresh vibrant walk with God in this coming year!
Melody

Inspiring Quotes to Prepare Yourself
For the 10-Day Heart Challenge and Prayers!
By Ellen G. White

“An intensity such as never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusement, in money making, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence, there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul. In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ Psalm 46:10. Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work. These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of physical, mental, and spiritual power. They need the uplifting influence of His Spirit. Receiving this, they will be quickened by fresh life. The wearied frame and tired brain will be refreshed, the burdened heart will be lightened. Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need” (*Education*, p. 260-261).

“There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation...Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from the assemblies of His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises” (*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887).

“Jesus sympathizes with the weakness of men; he came to earth that he might bring to us moral power. However strong the passion or appetite, we can gain the victory, because we may have divine strength to unite with our feeble efforts. Those who flee to Christ will have a stronghold in the day of temptation” (*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of Seventh-day Adventist*, p. 207).

“If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact... A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 34).

“Most professed Christians have no sense of the spiritual strength they might obtain were they as ambitious, zealous, and persevering to gain a knowledge of divine things as they are to obtain the perishable things of this life. Many are satisfied to be spiritual dwarfs...” (*Counsels for the Church*, p. 185).

“If we are determined not to be separated from the source of our strength, Jesus will be just as determined to be at our right hand to help us” (*Counsels to the Church*, p. 424).

“All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind.... Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 827). “[Christ is] the inexhaustible source of grace” (*Child Guidance*, p. 149).

“We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 507, 508).

“From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 300).

Heart Challenge – Day 1

Bible passage to read and reflect on: Rev. 3:14-19

- Who is this Bible passage written to? Do you think this passage applies to our life today, and if so, how do you see yourself in the picture.... or are you exempt?
- What does “rich,” “wealthy,” and “in need of nothing,” mean practically? What do these descriptions look like in your life, both in a literal and spiritual sense?
- What does “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” look like in your life?
- What does the “gold, white garments, and eye salve” that we are told to seek, stand for? (See 1 Pet. 1:7, Matt. 22:12, 1 Cor. 2:14) In what ways are you seeking these things?

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, as I begin a New Year, I have to ask myself if I have grown comfortable, complacent, content, and satisfied in my walk with You? Am I self-sufficient? Full of self-pity, discontent, or spiritual pride? (Rom. 3:10-12, 23)
- In what ways have “worldly attitudes” found their way into my heart? (Jer. 17:9)
- Am I more like the Pharisee or the Publican? (Luke 18:10-13)
- Or, am I so broken, having made so many mistakes, that I’m fearful to even come to Your throne? Have I been allowing the enemy to rob me of the abundant life You are longing to give? (John 10:10)
- You tell us when we come to You, we will never be turned away. It’s amazing to think that I can have an instant audience with the King of the Universe. Do I believe this promise is for me? (Heb. 4:16, John 6:37)
- Why is it so hard to slow down and come sit at Your feet? I am so weary, but yet I keep going. Do You truly have the rest that I so desperately need? (Matt. 11:28, Jer. 31:25)

From the Pen of Inspiration

“Those who experience the spiritual union with Christ never hunger for higher enjoyment. All uncertainty is gone, the weary soul finds continual refreshment in the Saviour. The feverish thirst for wealth and honor is gone. He is in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (*Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 2, p. 276).

“Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need. The Lord God through Jesus Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitation to the sinful and fallen. He will receive all. He welcomes all. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the lowest depths of human wretchedness, and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin. Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 161).

Heart Challenge – Day 2

Bible passage to read and reflect on: Eze. 37:1-14

- Sometimes we are afraid to admit our *dry bone condition* to others because we feel we are alone in the wilderness. But is this the case? (See verses 1,11)
- What causes the dry bones to come to life? (See verses 4, 5, 10)
- What is the result of the dry bones coming to life? (See verses 12-14)
- How might “hearing the word of the Lord” and receiving the “breath” correlate with the spiritual gifts God has given us for our daily spiritual walk?

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, are my ears and heart truly open to *hearing* Your Word? (Eze. 3:10)
- What are the roadblocks in my daily life, in my thinking habits, in my lifestyle that might be keeping me from really hearing what You are trying to tell me? (Ps. 139:23,24)
- Am I willing to obey Your Word, even if it’s not convenient or according to my personal preference? Why or why not? What are my fears? (James 1:22, 2 Cor. 13:5)
- Do I recognize my desperate need for the Holy Spirit? In what ways might I have grieved the Holy Spirit? Am I trying to manage the Holy Spirit for my own advantage rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to manage me? (Eph. 4:30, Ps. 66:18)
- What is keeping me from earnest, persevering prayer? Is there a grievance, anger, bitterness, resentment or un-forgiving spirit in my heart toward someone? (Mark 11:25)
- Lord, as I walk into this New Year, would You show me how to forgive, to love, to live like You, so that when people see me, they will think they’ve seen You! Would You fill me with Your Holy Spirit? (Eze. 36:26, Luke 11:13)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“[Oh] that the Lord would breathe upon His backslidden people, who are as dry bones, that they may live. The end is near, stealing upon us so stealthily, so imperceptibly, so noiselessly, like the muffled tread of the thief in the night, to surprise the sleepers off guard and unready. May the Lord grant to bring His Holy Spirit upon hearts that are now at ease, that they may no longer sleep as do others, but watch and be sober. Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of God, and striving to conform their lives to its precepts.... God calls for a revival and a reformation. A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work” (*Christian Service*, p. 41-42).

“Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

Heart Challenge – Day 3

Bible passages to read and reflect on: Matt. 23:27-28, and Rom. 2:28-29 (Note: Insert the word “Christian” in place of “Jew” as you read Romans.)

- What is the point of these passages? Why does God seem to care more about inward holiness than outward profession? (1 Sam. 16:7)
- Why is hypocrisy and having a form of godliness so deadly to our spiritual walk? (2 Tim. 3:5)

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, open my eyes to the ways that I might be living a double standard or a form of godliness. (Ps. 26:2)
- Is my profession of godliness evident in every part of my personal life? Would my family or closest friends testify to the godly consistency between my private and public walk? In what areas do I especially need to bring my life into greater conformity to Your Word?
- Lord, please change my heart and give me a spirit of true humility. Teach me how to be authentic and genuine, not as the world that takes pride in displaying self or sin, but in a way that truly brings honor to Your Name. (Ps. 115:1)
- I confess I fall so short of Your glory. Please turn my eyes to You. (1 John 1:9)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“You who are tempted and tried and discouraged, look up. Let no weary, halting, sin-oppressed soul become faint-hearted, and lose hope. The promises of God come sounding down along the lines to us, assuring us that we may reach heaven if we will abide in Christ. Look up; it is fatal to look down. Looking down, the earth reels and sways beneath you, and nothing is sure. A divine hand is reached toward you. The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace. The mighty Helper is nigh to help the most erring, the most sinful and despairing. Look up by faith, and the light of the glory of God will shine upon you. Do not be discouraged because you see that your character is defective. The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in distinct contrast with his perfect character. Be not discouraged; this is an evidence that Satan’s delusions are losing their power, that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you, and that your indifference and ignorance are passing away. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging may be your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you his arms of love and his robe of righteousness” (From the *Bible Echo*, December 1, 1892, par. 5).

Heart Challenge – Day 4

Bible passages to read and reflect on: Eph. 2:8-10

- According to this passage above, how are we saved? Reflect upon this a few minutes. Do we understand intellectually, while missing the deeper meaning in our heart?
- How have you experienced God's grace in your life? What role has faith played in your journey? How does faith continue to influence your journey? (Rom. 1:17, Heb. 10:38)
- Are you trusting in your faith or in the One who gives you faith? Why is "boasting" so dangerous to our spiritual walk? (Isa. 64:6)
- Write out some of the different aspects of God's love that touch you most personally.
- What does it mean to be Christ's workmanship? Has your heart ever been truly broken in gratitude at the cross, for God's amazing love and grace? (John 3:16)

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, are there ways that I am still striving *subtly* to work my way to heaven?
- Am I internally basking in my successes, or on the other hand, condemning myself over my failures, as I take personal inventory of my life? (Prov. 16:18, Rom. 8:33-34)
- Do I unconsciously rest on my works instead of Your righteousness? (Tit. 3:5)
- Forgive me Father, for not being broken at the cross, for failing to appreciate the great sacrifice You made for me. Break my heart afresh with Your love. (Rom. 5:8)
- Give my dull senses a fresh revelation of the significance of Calvary, of the sacrifice that was made, and help me catch a fresh glimpse of Your glory. (2 Cor. 4:6)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

"There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 44).

"All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned. Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat" (*1 Selected Messages*, p. 344).

Heart Challenge – Day 5

Bible passages to read and reflect on: Ps. 27:4, Matt. 6:33

- According to the passages above, what should be our one desire, our one aim?
- What does it mean to “dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life”?
- Why is the author so enthralled with the “beauty” of the Lord?
- Write down some beautiful characteristics that come to your mind as you think about the Lord and who He is? Why do you love Him? Why do you worship Him?
- Why is seeking first “His righteousness” so significant?

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, I long for You to be my one desire. But I admit, it is often other desires that hold my heart captive. It is often other lovers that I seek. Forgive me!
- Open my eyes to the lukewarm condition of my heart. Give me courage to ask the hard questions. Are You truly my One and only, or just one of the many gods I embrace?
- What do I think about in my spare moments? What do I dream about at night? What truly brings me joy? What makes me angry or brings me to tears? (Matt. 6:21)
- Please open my eyes to the distractions, the time wasters, the obstacles, the worldly enticements, the social media newsfeeds, the gossip, and the cynicism of others that dulls my spiritual sensitivities and keep me from hungering for more of You.
- May I lose my taste for the bread and wine of other lovers, but constantly hunger for more of You. Please be an overflowing fountain in my heart. (John 6:35, Rev. 21:6))
- Lord, I give You permission to re-order the affections of my heart. You are my Desire—not blessings, not more things, not honor, not fame, not answers, but YOU!

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Savior’s life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings, all are enlisted in behalf of man’s redemption” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 21). He did not give just any gift, “He gave the choicest gift of Heaven, and [as a result] the treasures of Heaven are at our command” (*1 Selected Messages*, p. 324).

“Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better. Often [we] cherish objects, pursuits, and pleasures that may not appear to be evil, but that fall short of the highest good. They divert the life from its noblest aim... When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. The enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardor, of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure. To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life’s highest ambition and its greatest joy. ‘The love of Christ constraineth.’ 2 Corinthians 5:14” (*Education*, p. 297).

Heart Challenge – Day 6

Bible passages to read and reflect on: 1 John 3:1-3

- What manner of love would cause the King of the universe to take us as His children?
- What does it mean in every day life that we are God’s sons and daughters?
- What have we been delivered from by this amazing adoption? (Rom. 8:15)
- Why will we be “like Him” when He appears? (2 Cor. 3:18)
- What does it mean that the world will not know us? (1 John 2:15, 16)
- How does reading this passage change my life today? (1 John 4:7, 8)

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, it is hard to comprehend that I’m actually part of Your royal family. Because of my unbelief, I often find myself still living like the beggar on the street. I’m crying for a morsel of bread, when You’ve already prepared me a royal banquet! (Eph. 1:4)
- Help me not to be ashamed of looking like You. Help me not worry about the applause or condemnation of men, but may my heart and eyes seek only Your praise.
- Teach me treat those around me as royalty, even those who curse me—for they are Your children, too. Help me to demonstrate royal dignity and live a life of faithful integrity, even with those who are less than honoring. (Matt. 5:44)
- Show me what it means to take persecution patiently, as You did! (Prov. 25:22)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“It was John’s deep love for Christ which led him always to desire to be close by His side. The Saviour loved all the Twelve, but John’s was the most receptive spirit... Jesus loves those who represent the Father, and John could talk of the Father’s love as no other of the disciples could. He revealed to his fellow men that which he felt in his own soul, representing in his character the attributes of God. The glory of the Lord was expressed in his face. The beauty of holiness which had transformed him shone with a Christlike radiance from his countenance. In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master. ‘Behold,’ he said, ‘what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.’ 1 John 3:1, 2” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 545).

“Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character, which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity” (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 355).

Heart Challenge – Day 7

Bible passages to read and reflect on: 2 Cor. 10:31

- Why is it important that we live for God’s glory in how we take care of our body? Why is this so significant? (1 Cor. 6:19,20)
- Why is what we eat and drink mentioned? What are some other places in the Bible where the importance of godly physical habits are mentioned? (See Dan. 1)
- What are some other important lifestyle principles that we can glean from the Bible?
- We know we aren’t saved by our works (Eph. 2:10), so why do our lifestyle and actions matter? If God’s Word steps on our toes, will we still follow it? Ouch, that hurts!

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, forgive me for the times that I forget my body is Your temple, and instead choose to use it for my own enjoyment. Show me the practical changes You wish me to make right now as I begin this New Year. Give me strength! (Phil 4:13)
- Turn my eyes upon You, Jesus! So often I find myself gazing at the things of the world rather than gazing at you, making excuses for why I can’t change. (Ps. 101:3)
- I’m afraid that my hands all too often seek after luxury or the lusts of my heart, rather than seeking after the glory and honor of Your name. (2 Thes. 1:12)
- Teach my ears to listen to the truth of Your Word, and seek Your direction, rather than turning to listen to gossip or enticing fables. (Isa. 30:21)
- Forgive me for the times I spend money for self rather than for laying up treasures in Heaven. Forgive me for the funds I’ve wasted. (Matt. 6:19-20)
- Change my appetites, Lord. I give You my will, but You have to give me power to obey what You ask of me! Please be master of the things that master me! (Phil 2:13)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“The misuse of our physical powers shortens the period of time in which our lives can be used for the glory of God. And it unfits us to accomplish the work God has given us to do. By allowing ourselves to form wrong habits, by keeping late hours, by gratifying appetite at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness. By neglecting physical exercise, by overworking mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus shorten their lives and unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature’s laws, are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow men also. The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short” (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 346).

“The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have had moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 491,492).

“Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin...” (*Counsels on Diets*, 185).

Heart Challenge – Day 8

Bible passages to read and reflect on: 1 Cor. 13, Luke 6:32-33

- Why is genuine love so important in our relation and service to others and even the Lord?
- Read and re-read 1 Cor. 13:4-8 and ask yourself, “How can I apply these principles of genuine love to my current situations and relationships that are not so lovely?”
- How can God’s Word change our every-day lifestyle and our way of relating to others, of talking about others, of serving others, of even *thinking* about others?
- Why is it so significant that we act in love, kindness, respect, and forgiveness, even to the unlovely and those undeserving? (Luke 6:35-38)

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, as I begin another year, I recognize that You have suffered long with me, but I have not always suffered long with others. I have not always been kind, patient, unselfish, or loving. Please forgive me! I have often fallen so short! (Eph. 4:32)
- Show me how to make things right in my relationship with others. Remind me of those I’ve wounded by my words or actions, and give me courage to apologize. Take away my prideful spirit and help me remember how You humbled Yourself to take on the cross for me. (Matt. 5:23, 24)
- Give me Your heart, Lord! Give me Your mind! (Phil 2:5)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

“‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.’ After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the disciples went forth to proclaim a living Saviour, their one desire was the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another, they revealed the love that Christ had enjoined upon them. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 547).

“We cannot afford to let our spirits chafe over any real or supposed wrong done to ourselves. Self is the enemy that we most need to fear. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self. We should not allow our feelings to be easily wounded. We are to live, not to guard our feelings or our reputation, but to save souls” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 485).

“If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self” (*Early Writings*, p. 119).

Heart Challenge – Day 9

Bible passages to read and reflect on: 1 Pet. 4:12-19

- Why shouldn't we be surprised when we experience trials and suffering?
- What's the difference between suffering that glorifies God and suffering that magnifies our human weakness? (1 Pet. 3:12-17)
- When life hurts and painful things happen, is it okay to cry or should we always try to be happy since we are told to rejoice in suffering? (Matt. 5:4, Ps. 56:8, Ps. 126:5)
- What does being a "partaker of Christ's sufferings" look like in your life?
- How can we become like "gold" through life's trials? (Job 23:10)

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, You know the personal struggles, the anxieties that break my heart and cause me silent pain. As I face a New Year, I ask that You use these trials to draw me closer to You. In fact, if it is pain that must keep me near the cross, then help me to embrace it, and cling to Your Word, rejoicing that I'm counted worthy to suffer. (Mal. 3:3, Acts 5:41)
- Forgive me for the times I've blamed You or been angry for the pain and hurts of life. Help me to remember that You are always good, no matter what life brings, and all these trials You will turn to good...someday. (Nah. 1:7, Rom. 8:28, Gen. 50:20)
- Help me to know that even when You are silent, You are still with me. Although I may not understand everything in this life, that's okay. (Heb. 13:5-6, Heb. 11:13)
- Take my pain and suffering as a fragrant offering. I surrender it to You. Help me to keep my eyes on heaven as I remember this world is not my home. (Rom. 8:18, Rev. 21:4)
- Finally Lord, teach me to be tender and empathetic with those who suffer. (Rom. 12:15)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

"He will work through those who can see mercy in misery, and gain in loss. When the Light of the world passes by, privilege will be discerned in hardship, order in confusion, success in apparent failure. Calamities will be seen as disguised blessings; woes, as mercies" (*Education*, p. 270).

"To all who are willing and obedient, to all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of the greatest discouragement and difficulty is the time when divine help is nearest. When the path of duty is obstructed by difficulties the most formidable, when it seems that the soul must give up in despair, the glory hidden behind the cloud that has darkened the way shines forth in all its brightness. Those who press on in the path of duty will look back with joy and thankfulness upon the darkest part of the way, where trials and difficulties seemed like a heavy cloud to hide every ray of God's sunshine. The Lord conceals himself from us in the cloudy pillar, as from ancient Israel. His ways are past finding out. Yet all that he makes known of himself, all that he can reveal to the most elevated mind, only convinces us of an infinity beyond, of wisdom, purity, and love" (*Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1880).

Heart Challenge – Day 10

Bible passages to read and reflect on: Heb. 11:1, 6

- In your own words, describe the essence of faith.
- Why can we trust that God will honor His Word to us? (Isa. 55:11, Num. 23:19)
- The Bible tells us, in Heb. 11:6, that when we come to God, we must believe that *HE IS!* Reflect on this single thought for a few minutes. Who IS God to You?
- Has the enemy spoken lies to your heart this past year, trying to paint a distorted picture of God? If so, how do you counteract those lies? (1 Thes. 5:21, 2 Tim. 2:15)
- What are some practical lessons we can learn from the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11?

Personal Heart Challenge and Prayers!

- Dear Lord, I recognize by my actions and anxieties at times, that I haven't trusted You as I should—even though You've proved Yourself over and over again. Help me to recognize that my lack of faith is sin. Forgive me for unbelief. (Heb. 4:1-2, Rev. 21:8)
- As I face this New Year, I want re-dedicate my heart and trust to You! (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Your Word tells us that, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word" (Rom. 10:17). Forgive me for spending so little time in the Word. Forgive me for often basing my faith on my feelings instead of the truths of Scripture. (Ps. 119:89)
- Teach me to love Your Word, live Your Word and share Your Word. (1 Pet. 3:15)
- Teach me what it means to walk, live, and pray by faith. (2 Cor. 5:7, Rom. 1:17)
- Teach me to always be tender to the voice of the Holy Spirit, willing to grow. (Isa. 30:21)
- Show me how to re-order my daily life so that You are always first, last, and best of all. That I will not just DO but that I will consistently take time to BE still and know that You are God. Teach me to bask and linger in the joy of Your presence! (Ps. 46:10, John 17:3)

From the Pen of Inspiration:

"Faith takes God at His word, with or without feeling. It 'is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' We can believe our fellowmen, and can we not trust the word of God? When we go to Him for wisdom or grace, we are not to look to ourselves to see if He has given us a special feeling as an assurance that He has fulfilled His word. Feeling is no criterion. Great evils have resulted when Christians have followed feeling. How do I know that Jesus hears my prayers?—I know it by His promise" (*Bible Echo*, September 24, 1894, par. 4).

"You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him" (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 146).

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).