A NEW DAY
21-DAY FAST
A NEW DAY. A NEW START. A NEW WAY.
Years ago, I was buying a car and really hit it off with the salesman. We had a great time talking about everything from hunting and fishing to fast cars. By the end of the transaction, we felt like old friends. That’s when he asked me what I did for a living. When I told him I was a pastor, he looked stunned. “You’ve got to be kidding me!” he said. “You’re not like any pastor I’ve ever met.”

We decided to go to lunch later that day, and he shared his story with me. When he was growing up, he became friends with a boy at school whose father was a pastor. This boy was mischievous, and one day he convinced my friend to help him break into the church and ransack a room just for fun. When the pastor found out who did it, he was embarrassed. He didn’t want his son to look bad so he blamed it on my friend and then kicked him out of the church in front of the entire congregation. It was the first and only time my friend ever went to church.

I told him I was sorry he had met a bad pastor all those years ago. We decided to meet again, and after a few more lunches, he accepted Christ as his Savior.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus tells us we are the salt of the earth. Salt is a preservative and keeps things from decomposing. We are living among spiritually dead people, so by being the salt to others, we’re preserving lives so they can hear the gospel and be saved. Without “spiritual salt,” our society would die.

Salt also causes things to taste better. Pretend with me for a moment the gospel is a steak. We’re the salt that helps it taste good. In the same way, when people come around us, they should be asking, “What is that taste? It’s so good!” And it’s because we’re giving them a taste of God!

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”
Matthew 5:13
But Jesus goes on to caution us in this verse that if salt becomes bad and loses its flavor—it’s not good for anything and should be thrown out. The first pastor my friend met was bad salt and made the gospel taste bad. But once my friend experienced good salt, he wanted to know Jesus!

When people are around you, what do they taste? Are you making God taste good or bitter? Are you making them hungry and thirsty for Him? If you want to be good salt, you need to stay close to Jesus and be purified by His word. That’s all it takes to let people taste and see that the Lord is good.

**Personal Application**

**Prayer**

Lord, thank You for making me salt to a world that needs to be preserved by the good news of the gospel. Help me to keep my flavor and be the good salt that will make others want to know You more. Thank You, Lord, for putting people in my life who I can influence for the kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

Psalm 34:8; Romans 1:21

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9
Have you ever felt out of place in the world around you? I’m sure that’s how Daniel felt when the Israelites fell under the rule of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken as captives and brought in to learn about and enhance Babylonian culture with their intellect, so they could one day take positions in the king’s court. They were basically given full-ride scholarships to Babylon University. And at BU, they learned the language, culture, history, politics, and creed of the kingdom.

They became completely engaged with the culture, but because of the integrity and fidelity they had with God, they were not influenced by it. Instead, they influenced it in a way that caused them to continuously be promoted. By the end of their education, the king found them to be even better than his own wise men, and he relied upon Daniel to interpret many of his dreams.

So how did they become fully immersed in this new culture while not being swallowed up by it? The answer is hidden in plain sight. They never fell in love with any of it, but they stayed in love with God.

In our world today, we’re faced with a similar problem. We are surrounded by a corrupt culture, and many Christians choose to withdraw from it. However, that’s not what Jesus did. When He walked the earth, He was constantly engaging with people—sinners, prostitutes, lepers, and others that religious leaders thought He should avoid. People take that to mean that Jesus hung out with sinners, but that’s not the case. Because of His influence, sinners wanted to hang out with Him.

Anytime Jesus would go to the house of a sinner—take

So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”

2 Corinthians 5:20
Zacchaeus, for example—His disciples went with Him. They were there because they were close with Jesus—not because they wanted to hang out with sinners.

We, as disciples of Jesus, are called to influence culture. That might mean engaging with a corrupt world. How do we keep from falling in love with the culture of the world? Take a look again at the way the disciples spent time with sinners—they stayed close to Jesus. Always ask yourself, “Where am I in proximity to Christ?” Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you, and as you go out into the world, remain close to the One who can use you to help it.

**Personal Application**

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**Prayer**

Holy Spirit, give me the boldness to be a bright light in a dark world. Allow me to have the grace to fill uncommon places with Your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

**For Further Study**

Daniel 1; Acts 4:29; Acts 10:38

**Memory Verse**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9
Day 3 // January 17
“You Want To Use My Light?” // Preston Morrison

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 5:14-16

There is an underground cave in Northern Arizona our family found several years ago. We were driving through a forest having a good old-fashioned Morrison family adventure when we unexpectedly came upon it. Were we completely unprepared to explore it? Yes. Did we decide to do it anyway? Of course! It was our sense of adventure that drew us to it.

As we approached this unassuming hole in the ground, the closer we got, the more I realized this was going to be a pretty serious undertaking. There were other people exploring it as well; some had harnesses and backpacks, but everyone had flashlights. We, however, did not. We decided to go in and try the first 100 feet to get an idea of how cold, dark, and difficult it would be. But before we even made it 100 feet, it was so dark we couldn’t see each other. Only when another climber would pass by us with a light could we see each other or where we were going.

As it was now quite obvious, due to the rising tension level of several in our group we simply were not going to be able to make this journey happen without light. We decided to climb out and come back when we all had lights. Before we made it out, a man and his two sons noticed we had no light to travel by and said, “Hey, you want to use my lights? We’ve got three cheap lights from Walmart you can have. There’s no way you guys could do this cave without them.” Of course, I immediately responded saying, “How dare you offer me a light to more easily travel this dark place safely! Get away from me and take your light with you!” Okay, okay, you know I didn’t actually say that. I’m trying to make a point. Of course, I was beyond grateful for his offer. The only reason we were able to explore the cave was because he
gave us his light.

Sometimes I think we Christians tend to forget just how valuable light is in a dark place. Some of us are so afraid to be the light God has called us to be because we are afraid it will offend those around us. That cave was the darkest place I have ever been. Kind of sounds like the state of the earth now, right? The next time you see someone trying to move forward in complete darkness with no light, offer them yours. They’ll be grateful you did.

**Personal Application**

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**Prayer**

God, please give me a heart that yearns to notice and help those walking in darkness. Give me the boldness required to stay bright in the darkest of places. In Christ’s name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

John 8:12; Ephesians 5:8

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9
With everything going on in our world today, I often find myself saying to the Lord, “God, we need You.” One day recently, I whispered those familiar words and almost instantly I felt the Holy Spirit whisper back: “Well, I need you.”

That moment changed everything for me.

What I realized was that God has given all of us influence, and He wants us to put action behind that influence. You use your influence by being willing and available to be used by God. As followers of Jesus, our role is to simply pursue Him with everything we are. Our obedience today will propel us toward how God will use our influence tomorrow.

However, many of us feel we aren’t ready to be used by Him. The lie we often tell ourselves is that we have to reach a certain point in our relationship with Jesus to be ready. It’s easy to get caught up trying to reach the unattainable goal of perfection in order to be influential for the kingdom. As long as we believe that lie, we can never rest in God’s grace.

The truth is your influence is greater than you could ever imagine—especially when you live from a place of grace. When you live from grace, and don’t strive to reach perfection, there’s an attractiveness in that. People take notice, and what they see isn’t us at all anyway. It’s the good news that Jesus Christ is alive in us.

So, the question is: how are you using your influence? If you’re like me, you have the potential to overcomplicate things. I can overcomplicate the folding of a bathroom towel so it’s not far-fetched for me to overcomplicate a question that has a simple answer. Our tendencies to constantly strive and hustle to prove
our influence are ineffective and exhausting. True influence happens when we realize we have nothing to prove and just obey and pursue Jesus as a son or daughter and invite others on the journey with us.

Today, I hope you realize the influencer you truly are. Right here and now. And may you hear the words of your Creator whisper to you: “This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.” I encourage you to walk with that boldness, confidence, and peace today.

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**Personal Application**

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**Prayer**

God, thank You that I can live my life from a place of confidence because of who You are and who You’ve called me to be. Help me to use the influence You’ve given me to give You the glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

John 14:12–14; Mark 16:14–18

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9
I was supposed to be writing this devotion today. Deadline looming, I was feeling the pressure of the clock when I heard a sweet little voice behind me, “Daddy, will you play with me?” This explains how I ended up with clay all the way to my elbows, making pinch pots and Barbie plates in the backyard with my daughter Nora. “Daddy, I’m hungry” led to sandwiches with my son Sam and an intriguing conversation about the relative merits of certain Lego sets. “Daddy, I threw up four times” put me on the couch beside my daughter Judah, then at the doctor’s office, then the pharmacy, and finally on my knees praying for her as she slept fitfully on the couch.

Each of these statements is like a little prayer, a simple expression of my children’s needs. Each looked like a detour from my “mission” but was in fact a gift that allowed me to connect with my kids. When you connect with people, you also minister God’s love to them. You connect heaven and earth, which is our true calling.

This calling to minister and connect is as old as humanity. Adam was created to connect God and creation. Walking with God, Adam ministered to His great, expansive heart. Then, walking in the garden, Adam ministered to the world God entrusted him with. As long as Adam ministered to God and creation, earth was a paradise in perfect relationship with God.

Of course, Adam fell and Jesus was born to carry the calling. Jesus’ life was spent in continuous connection with His Father and connecting with hurting people—ministering to their diseases and heartaches. Ultimately, He shed His own blood to heal and seal the broken relationship between heaven and earth. Jesus is the living connection between the two.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9
The Bible calls this ministry the priesthood, and it is the honor of every believer to: connect with God, connect with people, and connect the two to each other. It doesn’t require a master of divinity degree, and you’ve already been ordained by God Himself. You are called to steward the relationship between God and people. And so am I.

So excuse me, but I’ve got some priestly business to attend to. It’s bedtime and I have six kids to pray with. That may sound like a mundane mission, but it is my greatest privilege to minister to their hearts and teach them to minister to God’s heart—to steward their growing relationships with their heavenly Father. Pinch pots and prayers, sandwiches and doctor visits, Legos and consistent kindness—the details of life are the sacraments of our priesthood.

**Personal Application**

**Prayer**

Father, thank You for reminding me that I am both Your child and a priest. Stay close to me today and show me how I can minister to Your heart. Give me opportunities to connect with people and to minister Your love to them—even in the mundane routines of life. As I do these two things, I pray that through Your Son, Jesus, You would connect every one of those people to Yourself. Now guide me to carry Your love and Your presence into my world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

Revelation 1:5–6; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 6:19–20; 1 Corinthians 6:19

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9
As a gifted bass-fishing pro, Sonny made a great living touring and competing on ESPN. He was well on his way to becoming a millionaire until he got caught up in a horrible drug addiction and began to sell off all his things—his house, boat, Harley—everything.

Sonny wound up homeless, living on the streets of Las Vegas. For eight months, he woke up every morning and washed people’s car windows. Most days, the only thing he’d ever say was “Thank you” as people gave him a tip. Later in the day, he’d hop on a bus, ride across town to buy drugs, and come back to where he slept in a field beside a church.

Sonny didn’t want anything to do with God, but one day, he walked into the church because he heard he could get a shower, food, and some clean clothes. It had been three months since his last shower, and he stunk horribly. Yet, when he walked through the doors of the church, a woman named Michelle—a soccer mom—looked directly at Sonny and said to him, “You look like you need a hug.”

He looked at Michelle and said, “You don’t want to hug me.” She said, “No, you look like you need a hug.” Despite the fact that he smelled awful, Michelle walked up to Sonny and embraced him. Looking in his eyes, she said, “Jesus loves you.”

Thinking back to that moment, Sonny says, “I hadn’t been hugged in months. With all the street preachers I had encountered, all the tracts people had given me, and all the ‘Christian stuff ’ I’d seen in my life, nothing prepared me for that moment of genuine human contact.” As he looked Michelle in the eye, something cracked in his heart.
Sonny took a shower, got some clothes, and checked out a Bible from the church’s library. A few weeks later, he got on his knees and prayed, “God, I’m done. I don’t know how I’m going to deal with this addiction, but I surrender my life to You.”

Now, Sonny is drug-free, married, and a business owner. He’s also making a positive difference as an advocate for helping the homeless in Las Vegas. And it’s all because a soccer mom gave him a hug.

The Gospels tell us whenever Jesus encountered someone in need, He didn’t just passively stand by and offer encouraging words. He always responded by actively reaching out and touching their lives, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. And He calls each of us to follow His example and do the same—to be His hands and His feet to those we come in contact with each and every day.

When it comes down to it, that’s all “outreach” really is ... it’s simply reaching out. Imagine what kind of difference you can make if you just allow God to use you to reach out to those in need around you!

**Personal Application**

**Prayer**

Jesus, I want to reach out to those around me and love them as You would love them. I want to be like You. Show me ways I can practically love people every day. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 20:29-34

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9
We all have defining moments. Those times we’re faced with a choice of how to see the world, and I remember mine so vividly. I’d been married for about four years and we were living in a small second-story apartment. My oldest daughter was just 14 months old and I had recently given birth to our second child (crazy, right?). My husband worked three jobs just to make ends meet and to complicate things even more, we only had one car. As you can imagine: small children + small apartment + financially struggling + limited adult interaction = a challenging season of life.

I felt trapped, but even more than that, I felt as if I had no purpose. I’d always worked either in ministry or a job that I felt “useful” in. I remember thinking to myself, What happened to me? Is this my lot in life forever? Will I only be wiping noses and changing diapers the rest of my life? But then came my defining moment.

As I sat folding laundry in my living room one morning, the Lord spoke so clearly to me. He asked, “If your situation never changes, will you still love Me?” That stunned me for a minute. I stopped folding the tiny baby clothes in my hands and had to seriously ponder that question. But even as I considered it, I felt something within me rise to His challenge. With tears in my eyes I said, “Yes, Jesus. I will love You even if this situation never changes. Even if I never get to do anything else, I will still choose You every day.”

Isn’t the Lord so sweet in how He speaks to us? He knows exactly what we need to hear that will heal the deepest places of
our hearts. I didn’t even know I was struggling with my identity, but when He spoke those words to me, it touched that very issue. My sense of worth and value were tied up in the things I felt like I could accomplish in life when all He was wanting was for me to be found in Him.

Three months later, we moved into a three-bedroom house and were the proud owners of a second car that someone gave us because the Lord told them to. Little did I know that a simple mindset change would make way for a physical change.

So many times we think our identity is tied to the amount of influence we have. When in reality, it’s the opposite. When we truly know who we are, then our influence will be a natural outflow of that identity. He cares more about our hearts than He does about what we do for Him. At the end of the day, it’s all about how well we love Him and His people.

**Personal Application**

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**Prayer**

Father, I put my trust and hope in You. I thank You that You love me and care more about my heart than everything else. Please root out any areas where I have put my identity in anything other than You. Help me to see myself the way You see me. I love You, Jesus! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**For Further Study**

Colossians 3:1–3; Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:14

**Memory Verse**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9