

# WINFREE CHURCH



## PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

*Week Three*

SHARE CHRIST  SERVE OTHERS



*“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”*

This quote is often attributed to the 16th century German theologian and reformer, Martin Luther, and it is a source of debate on whether he actually said this pithy and succinct line. If he did or didn't, it doesn't change how true it is. Prayer is essential to the Christian. We cannot live this life if we stop breathing, yet sometimes we think we can live a successful Christian life if we never talk to God. I know that sounds rather reductionistic and I must confess that as a minister it is so easy to cast aspersions on the impaired prayer habits of many Christians. It is not helpful or sympathetic to ignore and evade the real root cause of why so many people struggle with prayer, the reason: the Church often does not do a good job teaching people to pray.

Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1-13). Jesus spent an immense amount of time in prayer. Jesus prayed before his baptism (Luke 3:21-22), before he fed the 5,000 (John 6:11), Jesus prayed after he dispersed the crowds (Matthew 14:23), Jesus prayed before he called his disciples (Luke 6:12-13), Jesus prayed after being nailed to the cross (Luke 23:34), and Jesus blessed the crowd before he ascended (Luke 24:50-53). Jesus's whole life was one full of prayer. The gospel narratives give the account of Jesus' life, the life of the incarnate God on earth, and these narratives speak of his times spent in prayer.

So, what is prayer? The theological definition of prayer this simple: commune with God. The word “commune” is so rich. To commune with God is to share our most intimate thoughts and feelings with God, to live our lives with God. Sometimes we think prayers need to be formal and full of Elizabethan or Victorian language as though our prayers must match the prayer books of past centuries. But really, God desires for you to speak as the person you are, not as someone you see on television, movies or as the pastors in the pulpits. Your prayers are you communing with God about your life. Share with God the good things and not so good things you feel and experience daily. Be yourself. God desires that.

As we pray for these 21 days, I want to encourage you to pray. This guide will help you organize thoughts and point you to areas of prayer. Each night at 7:00 from September 1st to 21st, you are invited to join with other Christians to prayer here at Winfree or online. If you struggle with how to pray, where to begin or what to say, this book will be a great help to you. This book was written by a member of Winfree Church who has a passion for connecting people to their Saviour in prayer.

I pray this will be a blessing to you and for our Winfree Church family.

Post Tenebras Lux,  
Rev. Joshua P. Roberts

*21 Days  
of Prayer*

# IF MY PEOPLE WILL PRAY...

**OBJECTIVE:** To pray for Winfree Church during this season of transition. We need to pray for:

**BOLDNESS** to share Jesus in a culture that increasingly does not know Him

**PROTECTION** of our freedom to continue worshipping our Triune God

**COMPASSION** for others who we are called to serve

**FAITHFULNESS** to follow the Holy Spirit's leading

*"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." – 1 John 5:14*

**PROCESS:** Beginning on Sunday, September 1 and concluding on Saturday, September 21, all Winfree attendees are invited to pray in person at church or virtually. All are encouraged to join us in prayer for Winfree during this season of transition whether or not you join us at church or online.

This Prayer Devotional will help you focus on a topic for each day by using Scriptures as your reference to guide your prayer. There will be a selection of suggested Scriptures for your use or you can choose your own. Our method is as follows:

- 1.** Read the Scripture
- 2.** Focus on words or phrases that touch your heart from your own life experiences
- 3.** Pray aloud or silently, in your own words, the essence of the words or phrases that you choose. We will model this method for you on Day 1, and there will be a short devotion provided for each daily topic.

If you need a reason for prayer, just look to the life and work of Jesus. Like the steady rhythm of a pendulum Jesus moved from ministry to prayer and back again. He communed with God, then connected with people. It is a movement that would give meaning to our lives today.

Prayer is especially important at this time in the life of Winfree Church. As you look for your next preacher and pastoral leader, ask God to direct the Pastor Search Committee in its task and to prepare the congregation to welcome God's direction in the process. As we open ourselves to God's future through prayer God will open Winfree's future as well.

Join us in this 21 day journey.

Blessings,  
Dr. Mike Clingenpeel

# Praying in Transition

**SEPTEMBER 15-21**

DAY 15

**LISTENING WITH HEART  
TO GOD'S CALLING**

DAY 16

**FOLLOWING AS THE  
HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US**

DAY 17

**SUSTAINING OUR WINFREE STAFF**

DAY 18

**UPHOLDING OUR LAY LEADERS**

DAY 19

**EQUIPPING OUR SAINTS FOR SERVICE**

DAY 20

**OUR TRANSITION TEAM**

DAY 21

**OUR MINISTERIAL SEARCH TEAMS**

*“God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.”*

— Mother Teresa

Our prayer focus this week is on talking with God during seasons of transition. Let's return to the devotion for Day 7 of **Twenty-One Days of Prayer** for a moment. Recount the gardening story from our previous prayer event, **Thy Kingdom Come**. Do you see any signs of need in the picture of one of our flower boxes that contain seeds representing your prayers for that day? The life of mankind began in a garden called Eden. God was not distant nor invisible to Adam and Eve in that beautiful place. The God of the Universe was present, and He walked and talked with them. Pastor Charles Stanley said:

*The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*

Let's go with Jesus' disciples to another garden, the garden called Gethsemane (the winepress garden).

*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me. Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” —Matthew 26:36-39*

In this garden, the Son of Man, in His physical image, walks into the garden alone with God's Spirit as a part of His very fabric. He falls to His face in prayer to God the Father with two expressions of the same question. The first is

in verse 39, and He asks the same thing again in a different manner in verse 42. Do you know what was in the cup?

If you read all of **Matthew 26**, you will see that Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray after the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread that always preceded the celebration of the Passover. His visit to the garden was also after celebrating the Last Supper; identification of the disciple who would betray Him before the authorities; and after Peter, the rock upon which Jesus would build the church, was told by Jesus that he (Peter) would disown him (Jesus) three times before the rooster crows.

So what about the contents of the cup? The Israelites partook of four cups during Passover: 1) a cup to celebrate God's Chosen People coming out from under the yoke of slavery in Egypt, 2) a cup to acknowledge that God was setting their people free, 3) a cup to recall how God is always in the processing of redeeming His children, bringing them back to His family in a loving relationship, and 4) a cup of promise for protection from God's wrath against sin.

In **Jeremiah 25:15-16**, the Bible mentions a Fifth Cup, the cup of damnation to be poured out upon those who scorn and mock God the Father. Rabbis have debated about including this Fifth Cup in celebration of Passover. They decided to await the return of Elijah to make the decision. So this Fifth Cup is often called Elijah's Cup. What happened to this cup of damnation?

Jesus listened to His Father's answers to his questions in Gethsemane. His heart was heavy for the people who He loved. Yet the thought of the horrific experience that would come His way for passing on drinking from the Fourth Cup (the one of protection from God's

wrath) shook Him, He still listened to God and passed on the Fourth Cup to drink the contents of Elijah's Cup for us. When did He drink it?

**John 19:28-29** tells us:

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

In His last act for us on the cross where He hung in agony and humiliation, Jesus took one last drink, then bowed His head and relinquished His Spirit back to God in heaven. God makes gardens. Since casting Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, mankind has been assigned the task of gardening. Sometimes God brings rain; other times there is scorching heat and humidity. Gardeners are called to tend to the seeds, seedlings, and plants to allow the plants to thrive and live. Our prayers to God are less about our requests and much more about how we listen and act as Jesus did.

Listening to God - which is a key part of practicing His presence - is not a method, but a walk with a person. – Leanne Payne. Will you walk with God in the garden today?

## ON DAY 15, FIND A GARDEN TO VISIT AND PONDER THESE SCRIPTURES TO LISTEN TO GOD...

**John 10:27-28** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

**Romans 10:17** *So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**Revelation 3:20** *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me.*

**Proverbs 3:5-6** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

**John 10:2-4** *But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*

**Psalms 37:7-9** *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.*

God is opening doors of opportunity in our community. How will we know which door to take if we do not listen to Him in our daily conversations with God? We identify as disciples of Christ Jesus. May we not mimic the drowsy behavior of His disciples outside the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus asked them to remain vigilant while He went into the garden to pray. May we listen to God and follow His Holy Spirit as we journey in this season of transition for our Winfree family.

*My talk with God:*

---

---

---

---

---



*“Anything, and I mean anything, becomes a blessing if it drives us to prayer.”*

—Jim Cymbala

Winfree Memorial Baptist Church is in transition. Most of us have experienced seasons of transition in our churches. Transitions can be difficult and stressful. A former pastor of a local church presented a member of his congregation with a book by Gordon McDonald called *Who Stole My Church? – What to Do When the Church You Love Tries to Enter the 21st Century*. Here's how Amazon describes the book:

*Who Stole My Church?* is a fictional story that tells the all too real tale of many church communities today. In this book, you can walk alongside an imaginary community, led by real-life pastor Gordon MacDonald and his wife, Gail, and discover how to meet the needs of all believers without abandoning the dreams and desires of any.

If you read this book, you will recognize many of the characters. One or more might be the person who you see in the mirror. Persevere with reading and you will discover that the fictional Pastor during this storm that could divide his congregation describes a process that helped unite the congregation, resolve conflicts, and help the congregation come together to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. It can be tough to read. But as Pastor Jim Cymbala of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church says above, blessings come when our circumstances drive us to pray earnestly.

Transitions in churches are journeys that take us into the unfamiliar. Let's be candid with one another – few of us relish “uncertainty” so much that our response would be, “Oh, yes, can I have another helping of that?!”. Winston Churchill made one of his famous quotes during World War II that is relevant to our journey: When you are going through hell, keep going! We should hope that Churchill's quote is hyperbole for what our churches face

during the transition, but the point is that we must keep moving forward and growing in our faith.

How can we have the wisdom and strength to reach that objective when we are reminded each day of the challenges presented by our transition? God's Word is filled with stories of His people struggling in troubling times of transition. For Christians, the most relevant story of transition is found in **Acts 2**.

Luke opened this story by setting the scene: Jesus' disciples and followers were in one place when Jesus' promised Holy Spirit arrived and filled each of them. Pentecost was so amazingly different than anything they had experienced previously that **Acts 2:12** tells us that they asked one another “What does this mean?”.

Luke recounted their discussion and offered explanations to this question in verses 13-37 concluding with Peter's challenging invitation:

*Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

Jim Cymbala contends: “The birth of the church was during a prayer meeting, not preaching, not singing, but prayer.” Wow, have you ever realized that fact? We come to church for many reasons. Some come for the fellowship. Others are attracted by magnificent choirs singing inspirational anthems and hymns or awesome praise bands rocking the attendees with the energy from their uplifting songs of praise to God. Some come with a curiosity to explore the depths of God's purpose and messages to



mankind from the study of the Bible. Some come because their parents bring them. Preaching Pastors want to believe that we come to hear a great sermon, and in Winfree's current transition, that's a great and valid reason to invite a friend to attend to hear Dr. Clingenpeel preach God's Word. But once a church is formed and comes to a season of transition, what keeps them united to move forward following where the Holy Spirit leads?

Many pastors know that a church that prays together will stick together through all testing by the Evil One. Pastor Cymbala has been a vocal witness to the importance and power of prayer in the church that God trusted him to lead. His insights are so important for us to ponder that there are a few other quotes from him that we need to know.

*The devil is not frightened of our human efforts and credentials. But he knows his kingdom will be damaged when we begin to lift our hearts to God. No matter what I preach or what we claim to believe in our heads, the future will depend upon our times of prayer.*

*Does the Bible ever say anywhere from Genesis to Revelation, 'My house shall be called a house of preaching'? Does it ever say, 'My house shall be called a house of music'? Of course not. The Bible does say, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'. Preaching, music, the reading of the Word - these things are fine; I believe in and practice all of them. But they must never override prayer as the defining mark of God's dwelling. The honest truth is that I have seen God do more in people's lives during ten minutes of real prayer than in ten of my sermons.*

And then he asked this poignant question that hits home with us all:

***What does it say about our churches today that God birthed the church in a prayer meeting, and prayer meetings today are almost extinct?***

If there ever was a time, now is the time that Winfree Church must embrace prayer as the glue that keeps us together at the foot of God's throne. We praise Him for Jesus and Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to be in us and with us always until He returns at the end of time. Come and see what God has in store for Winfree Church as we join together in prayer.

*On Day Sixteen, feel the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in you as you pray ...*

**Psalm 24:4-5** *Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you, I wait all the day long.*

**James 1:22** *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

**John 16:13** *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*

**Acts 2:33** *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*

**Galatians 5:25** *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

**1 Corinthians 3:16** *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

**As you pray today for the Holy Spirit to lead Winfree Church boldly into the future, you may feel inadequate to fully express your trust in the Holy Spirit to lead. You will not be alone. Paul gives us the advice we need in Romans 8:26: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The Holy Spirit goes before us even in prayer.***

*“Praying always means praying through things and not giving up. It means being ever-watchful and persevering in prayer in order to see breakthrough.”* —Stormie Omartian

Sixteen days of prayer behind us and five more days to go, we are in the home stretch as our hearts and minds turn to those who need our support during this season of transition. Let us begin with earnest prayer in support of our staff who are carrying a heavy load of responsibility. Burnout and departures are not uncommon during seasons of transition for the staff of churches when a Senior Pastor departs for whatever reason. Long-time members of Winfree know this truth from past experiences.

For those of us in the laity, we are not naïve about the experiences that bring on feelings of insecurity when changes occur in the leadership of organizations. We ask ourselves many unknowable questions... Is there a future for me in this organization? Will I be “laid off” if things don’t go well? Will there be unrest among those leaders who aspire to climb the organizational ladder? Will we be called together one morning for an announcement that we are entering Chapter 11 bankruptcy to re-organize? Are there greener pastures elsewhere for my giftedness? Stress increases exponentially with more and more questions of doubt.

For the past 16 days, we have had an opportunity to turn our hearts and minds to the truths that God has for all of mankind. We have poured over those spiritual truths to renew our strength to successfully endure this time of transition. But we want to emerge from this season with the fresh, lively renewal that we can observe when a withering plant receives just enough water to get through another hot and humid day. So how can those of us in laity best support our staff during this challenging time of transition?

**FIRST**, let us acknowledge that we are all, whether on staff or in the laity, united in the love of Christ Jesus as one of His brides, a church called Winfree Memorial Baptist Church. God’s family is designed to be led by those with the heart of a redeemer and

made stronger together through prayer. Our stated mission, **Share Jesus... Serve Others**, is our special calling to keep Jesus’ final commandment to us to love one another in our hearts and minds. So how do we show our love for our staff?

Valerie Carter, the Executive Director of WMU in Virginia, once remarked that she had noted a difference between laity in predominantly “white churches” and those in “churches of color” that goes deeper than the pigmentation of our skin. With a smile on her face, she said, “Affirmation and praise are offered more freely and continuously in “churches of color” than in “white churches”. Her remark was not intended to shame one group while lauding the behavior of another. She simply suggested that ministerial and support staff in all churches need to feel our love through affirmation of appreciation that nurture these servants of God always. Can we make it a top priority to express our appreciation for Winfree’s staff during this season of transition?

**SECOND**, can we dig deeper to offer our giftedness from God to help continue the work of our church during this special season? Oh, we have all heard this at Winfree and in different churches that 20% of the people do 80% of the work in the church. That ratio is never sustainable without burnout. We have examples around us of our members who have stepped out and up to help those who reached their tipping point. Some new helpers have emerged from their Sunday morning Bible studies to help in our ministries to children. We need more helpers. Oh, for more children to come to Winfree to feel the love of God through people who are willing to sacrifice more of their time to teach kids about God. If we want our Young Adult ministry to grow at Winfree, young adults with children must know that their kids will be loved and cared for so that they can participate in the life and service of our church. Without young families coming to any churches, sustainability will wither in the shortening shadow of time that follows each of us.

**THIRD**, churches pay staff members through our weekly donations. Donations decline when attendance declines. Attendance declines during transitions for many reasons. Winfree has been sustained through difficult transitions, like during the restrictions that we experienced during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, through your generous financial support that became a serious issue for many other churches. For July, our donations were reported as \$34,458.56 short of our budget. Yes, we all feel the impact of inflation that stresses our family budgets. But our church's family budget is being stressed in the first month after Pastor Benjamin's retirement. We must continue to give generously in support of Winfree during these challenging times. This is another important way to support our staff.

**FOURTH**, and most importantly, we need to pray for our staff daily. From yesterday's devotion, we know that the Holy Spirit will provide the words we need as we groan in despair that we do not know what to pray for our staff. However, you are encouraged to do the unusual – ask a staff member how you can pray for them. And continue to ask. And then assure them that you will pray and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to say exactly what God needs to hear to bless the work of each member of our Winfree staff.

A principle of prayer has been expressed this way: "The light of God's love is what scatters the darkness. Tether your prayers to the brightness of His promises." Our staff is called by God to hold the light of Jesus high to chase away the evil that lurks in the dark corners of life. With our commitment to continually support them, let us pray today for our Winfree staff.

**ON DAY 17, COME TOGETHER TO PRAY FOR OUR WINFREE STAFF...**

**Philippians 4:6-7** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**Isaiah 41:10** *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

**Hebrews 13:5-6** *Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

**Romans 8:28** *And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

**Deuteronomy 31:8** *It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

Call out their names as you pray for each one: Josh the Elder Leader of Young Adults, Jimmy the Younger, Jimmie the Elder, Matt the Newly Wed, Lauren for Preschoolers, Lindy in Finance, Carol the Singer of God's Blessings, Caroline the Herder of Cats and Mike the Mighty Voice from God. And let's not forget to pray for those who came before them and are now in "retirement" – Pastors Benjamin, Weaver, Mapp, and Collins. As we have been blessed by their call to ministry, may we ask God to continue to pour out blessings on each of these from our family of God.

*My talk with God:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*“I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that he will guide me to do whatever I’m supposed to do, what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I’m praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things.”* — Mother Theresa

Do you recall how the mother of the two disciples known as the Sons of Thunder asked Jesus to elevate her sons in His Kingdom? Re-visit this story in **Matthew 20:20-27**. These sons of Zebedee may have wanted to be recognized as “leaders” as Jesus established the Kingdom that they envisioned. They told Jesus that they were able to drink from the cup that He would take. Do you recall Elijah’s Cup from our devotional on Day 15? Sometimes, we may believe that we are ready to lead but we have not yet been tested. The Master’s Men could not see that their time of testing was yet to be revealed after Jesus’ death.

So how is this story relevant to our topic of prayer today to Uphold Our Lay Leaders? The answer lies in verses **Matthew 20:25-28**.

*But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Jesus was and is the model for servant leadership. He disciplined and mentored 12 disciples, gave them their mission, and let them fail to learn how to lead. Servant leaders can always be found either washing hands or washing feet. They seek opportunities to serve others so that the light of Jesus can shine from their hearts to bless those whom they serve. Serving others prepares us to lead as Jesus did. Winfree needs to diligently find ways to identify emerging leaders, mentor them in the model that Jesus used for His disciples, encourage them to know how to delegate responsibility while maintaining accountability to God and grow our capacity as servant leaders in our church family and Midlothian community.

James M. Strock wrote in *Serve to Lead*: “Twenty-first-century leadership relationship dynamics are from the bottom up rather than the top down; from the outside in, rather than the inside out.”

This quote challenges our legacy of leaders to consider finding and mentoring a successor to fulfill each leadership role at Winfree as the Holy Spirit leads and calls us to become servant leaders. We have our mission: **Share Jesus... Serve Others**. That is our calling, whether as a member of our leadership staff or lay leaders.

As we uphold our Winfree leaders in prayer today, consider this quote from James Kouzes and Barry Posner in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*: “Of all the things that sustain a leader over time, love is the most lasting. The best-kept secret of successful leaders is love: staying in love with leading, with the people who do the work, with what their organizations produce, and with those who honor the organization by using its work.”

Do you see the parallel application between this quote and the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35: **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**



In a recent session of our Dunamis Bible Study group during our Intermission for Intersession time, we were challenged to pray for Winfree Church during transition with these specific topics in mind:

May we offer prayers for Winfree Memorial Baptist Church in a season of transition...

- **Prayer for Dr. Benjamin and Jana as they move to Nashville in retirement**
- **Prayer for our Winfree staff to continue their callings to “feed and equip our sheep for service”**
- **Prayer for our Church Council to continue following the lead of the Holy Spirit**
- **Prayer for less active members who feel the urge to apply their gifts of service to Winfree**
- **Prayer for the members of our Transition Team**
- **Prayer for God’s chosen Intentional Interim Pastor for Winfree**
- **Prayer for Pastor Search Team to follow where the Holy Spirit leads us to God’s chosen Shepherd to lead Winfree into the future**

Have you seen evidence of God’s answers to some of these prayers? Will you let those observations encourage and motivate you to continue to uphold our Winfree leaders in prayer?

## *On Day Eighteen, lift our Winfree leaders in prayer...*

**1 Timothy 2:1-15** *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ...*

**Daniel 2:21** *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;*

**Hebrews 13:17** *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

**Ephesians 6:12** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

**1 Timothy 3:1-7** *The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?*

In team sports, the teams with the “strongest benches” rise to the top. When one leader gets injured or is not in the right position to serve the team, the coach looks to the bench for prepared substitutes.

As we look to the future of Winfree Church, we should examine our “leadership bench”. Are we mentoring as we lead? Can we enjoy serving as a mentor as much as we enjoy serving ourselves? Are we endowed with Jesus’ model of leadership for His disciples? God has His plan for Winfree Church. Do we have a full complement of leaders on our team to implement His plan and accomplish the mission statement given to our church? Let’s uphold and honor our current leaders as we seek to Share Jesus... Serve Others.

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”*

— Stormie Omartian Bounds

Have you ever considered whether or not the Christians in the **Book of Acts** could recognize a modern-day Christian church as a familiar model that resonates with their soul? In the history of the Christian church, different models of organization to worship God have emerged during seasons of transition. For example, during a time of extreme persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire’s leaders, Emperor Constantine permitted Christians to worship in a church organization that we now know as the Roman Catholic Church. Years later, Christians in this tradition splintered to become the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church. The Reformation brought forward a different model of church that we know as Protestant. Church models have changed through the ages but God remains the same. So should we not ask ourselves what is God’s model for the church of His Son, Jesus Christ? Where would we look to find this model?

Have you inquired from Pastors of rapidly growing flocks of Christians “What do you credit for the growth of your flock?”. “Growth” could mean an increase in the number of attendees OR increased spirituality among attendees OR both. Some local pastors, including one of our own at Winfree, have witnessed what Jim Cymbala testified about in a quote from our devotional on Day 16. Do you recall?:

Does the Bible ever say anywhere from Genesis to Revelation, ‘My house shall be called a house of preaching’? Does it ever say, ‘My house shall be called a house of music’? Of course not. The Bible does say, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’. Preaching, music, the reading of the Word – these things are fine; I believe in and practice all of them. But they must never override prayer as the defining mark of God’s dwelling. The honest truth is that I have seen God do more in people’s lives during ten minutes of real prayer than in ten of my sermons.

So what was included in the model of a Christian church shortly after Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven? See the text of **Acts 2:42-47** and highlight the essentials of these ancient followers of Jesus.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Scripture teaches us that in God's Kingdom, "the first shall be last and the last first." Can you imagine that this statement applies to verse 42 and the underscored words recorded there? Should we proceed with teaching, fellowship, and breaking bread before we pray to God to receive His instructions and blessings for our church? It is not that prayer should be all that we do if we intend to follow the model of church practiced by the earliest disciples, but we should all agree that prayer must be central to all that we do as we praise God the Father. What is the purpose of an Invocation at the beginning of a Christian worship service?

Pastor Cymbala confesses that despite all of the sermons he gave to the attendees of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, the church was stagnant. He says that he was approached by one of their members to ask if it would be alright with him if he gathered some people to pray for their church while he preached. What could he say? Of course, he favored having prayer but he must have wondered how many might volunteer to become part of what became known as the Prayer Band. Once the Prayer Band started lifting their united voices to God, the Holy Spirit revealed itself as "wind and fire" as Pastor Cymbala would write in his book. Here are some more quotes from his experience. See if you can relate...

- 1.** The thing about prayer that reaches God's ear is that it comes from a sincere heart that wants to walk in the light and is looking to God in faith.
- 2.** The more we pray, the more we sense our need to pray. And the more we sense a need to pray, the more we want to pray.
- 3.** The hardest part of the prayer of faith is waiting.
- 4.** The first rule of prayer is not 'faith,' but whether the request is according to God's will.
- 5.** Prayer is the opening of the heart so we can receive all these good things that God has for us every day.
- 6.** Preaching, music, the reading of the Word—these things are fine—but they must never override prayer as the defining mark of God's dwelling.
- 7.** Only turning God's house into a house of fervent prayer will reverse the power of evil so evident in the world today.

Your giftedness from God might be music; if it is, join our Winfree Praise Band or Choir. Maybe your gift is teaching God's Word; if it is, stand ready to lead a Bible study on Sunday or during the week. Some are gifted in praying; if you are, pray continuously for Winfree to be known as a House of Prayer from which blessings flow down from God the Father to those we serve.

Hopefully, there will be a blessing as an answer to prayer for our Pastor Search Team to lead us to meet a gifted preacher who will be dedicated to equipping the saints in our flock to discover other giftedness that has yet to be recognized. Could it be that you are gifted in praying but have not yet witnessed the power of that gift from God?



## **LISTEN TO PASTOR CYBALA ONE LAST TIME:**

*God performs acts of power in response to prayer that he would not otherwise do. If this is not true, then the Bible is filled with countless inaccuracies and fairy tales. I learned as never before that persistent calling upon the Lord breaks through every stronghold of the devil, for nothing is impossible with God. For Christians in these troubled times, there is simply no other way.*

*On Day Nineteen, will we pray for that leader who will come to equip our saints for service...*

**1 Peter 4:10** *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:*

**Mark 10:45** *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

**Mark 9:35**

*And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.*

**John 12:26** *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

**Matthew 20:26-28** *It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

## **AS ONE BODY IN CHRIST, MAY WE RECALL THE WISDOM OF THE APOSTLE PAUL AS HE WROTE TO DIFFERENT CHURCHES.**

### **From the Letter to the Romans 12:3-8...**

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ...

### **And from 1 Corinthians 12:12-26...**

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ...

**In Unity as Winfree Church, we humble ourselves before God's Throne of Grace.**



*“By failing to prepare,  
you are preparing to fail”*

—Stormie Omartian

Only God knows with certainty the future of mankind. The future of Winfree Church is entrusted to the leadership of some members who know where to look for the path that our church will be in God’s will as we transition into meeting the needs in our culture that change more rapidly now than at any other time in history. They need our prayers. Prayer to search and study scriptures that reveal how the history of great cultures can collapse suddenly and without warning. Yet God prevails over and through these failures. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Men succeed when they realize that their failures are the preparation for their victories.” When we sing the chorus of Victory in Jesus, we focus on the promise of eternal life through Jesus’ redemption of us. Recall the assurance for our souls in E.M. Bartlett’s words:

O victory in Jesus,  
My Savior, forever.  
He sought me and bought me  
With His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him  
And all my love is due Him,  
He plunged me to victory,  
Beneath the cleansing flood.

But let’s not diminish our calling as Christians to live for Christ by living as Christ did. Christ Jesus is our model for living a righteous life pleasing to God the Father. In times of transition for churches, we should not be satisfied and comfortable with just maintaining the status quo while we are seeking a new Shepherding Pastor for our flock. Can we consider how we can support and encourage our Transition Team to assess our strengths and weaknesses as a

community of Jesus’ followers to prepare for the opportunities that God has for our church? We have time – critical time – in this interval between the close of Dr. Benjamin’s ministry to Winfree Church to the ministries that will define Winfree Church over the next decades. How might we proceed?

### 1. GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT MOVING TO LEAD US

Throughout the Old Testament, we read story after story of the rise and fall of God’s Chosen People. What led to failure in every single instance? God’s people allowed the beliefs and practices of cultures that did not know God the Father to tempt God’s Chosen People to emulate cultural practices foreign to His desires for them. May all of us commit to studying the failures of mankind in both the Old and New Testaments to prepare for the future opportunities that God will reveal to Winfree Church.

### 2. STRUCTURE OUR ORGANIZATION TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

– It is too easy to fall into a trap of awaiting the next Shepherding Pastor to lead us rather than to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit leads and invites the laity and ministers to follow together. Shepherds seek flocks that our united in purpose and commitment. Our Winfree mission to **Share Jesus... Serve People** is a worthy purpose consistent with God’s Word. Are we united in our commitment to always be prepared to share the Good News of Jesus as we serve others in our Midlothian community?

### 3. ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR MINISTRIES TO AND FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

– When young parents realize the negative impact of common practices in our culture, they become seekers of principles and values to teach their children to keep them safe. Every day our children and youth turn to various methods to escape the pressures of their culture. Substance abuse continues to rise in our culture. How can we help our young parents know how to avoid habits and hang-ups that lead to a path of destruction for their

children? The abusive use of social media technologies influences and threatens our youngest Americans every hour of every day. How do we harvest the positive benefits of social media technology to meet the needs of children of all ages? Are we preparing our plans to make Winfree a stronger influence in our Midlothian Community that attracts young parents with their children and youth to know God's purpose and plans for them?

**4. COVER THE TRANSITION TEAM AND WINFREE CHURCH IN PRAYER** – This series of daily devotionals is focused on adults. It has been purposefully designed to lead us to pray scriptures in our own words as they inspire and apply to our lives now and until Jesus comes again. But what about teaching this same concept of “praying scriptures” to our children and youth? How do we do that? Jodie Berdt has published two resources that our Transition Team might consider making available to our Winfree children and youth. The titles are: Praying the Scriptures for Your Children 20th Anniversary Edition: Discover How to Pray God's Purpose for Their Lives and Praying the Scriptures for Your Teens: Opening the Door for God's Provision in Their Lives. We need to pray that each of us will bring to the attention of our Transition Team leaders resources that will be helpful as we prepare for the future that God holds for us.

### ON DAY 20, PRAY FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR TRANSITION TEAM...

**Jeremiah 29:11** *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

**Philippians 1:6** *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

**James 1:2-4** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

**Isaiah 43:18-19** *“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

**Romans 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Our Transition Team includes Amy Doumlele, Angela Godfrey, Ed Wickham, Jimmie Miles, Jimmy Doan, Josh Roberts, Marie Peters, Mary Scott Garrett, Math Knesal, Meredith Sigler, Mike Oberschmidt, Sam McNeny, Scott Barlow and Vivian Sillmon. Please continue to pray for the work of this Team as we move forward into the future.

*My talk with God:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

—Max Lucado

We concluded Twenty-One Days of Prayer today by focusing on our Pastor Search Team, and more broadly, on future Search Teams to fill leadership openings on our Ministerial Staff. As we prepare to pray specifically for our Pastor Search Team, we must acknowledge that this Team will maintain confidentiality as they go about the work that we have called them to do. There is Biblical support for doing so. First, you probably have heard someone say: “What the Old Testament conceals, the New Testament reveals.” God’s people do not need to know every detail about the journey on which the Pastor Search Team has just embarked. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, **“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” – 2 Corinthians 5:7.**

If you happen to remain uncomfortable in taking Paul’s observation to heart, then accept the challenge to pray about a couple of important issues for Winfree Church during this season of transition: 1) how will Winfree Church distinguish our calling to the Midlothian Community that we serve and 2) what kind of gifts do we want our future Pastor to share with us to prepare us in fulfilling our mission for **Sharing Jesus... Serving Others?**

First, can we acknowledge that Winfree Church is a different congregation today than it was when Dr. David Benjamin was called to lead this flock some 16 years ago? Most of us grew spiritually from Dr. B’s sharing his knowledge of the Bible, especially the New Testament; his ability to engage everyone he met with a friendly smile and cordial invitation to visit Winfree Church; his heart for youngsters inside and outside of Winfree who could connect with one of his passions, especially cross-country running; and his willingness to try new means for serving people outside of Winfree in our Midlothian Community. Add what you will to Dr. B’s legacy, but remember the impact of changes to Winfree Church that came about during his leadership.

Second, can we acknowledge that the Midlothian Community has changed dramatically in the past decade and a half? Midlothian is no longer a sleepy, suburb for commuters who work in the City of Richmond or other locations across Central Virginia. The population is growing rapidly and now spans three ZIP codes. More importantly, the culture has changed across America and even in places like Midlothian. Ideologies divide us into tribes in polar opposite camps, possibly like no other time in history. As Dr. Clingenpeel noted in one of his recent sermons, we need to focus on building bridges and not walls.

So that brings us to the invitation to pray for how God will judge our efforts to continue our mission by walking in faith in Christ Jesus and not by our vision. Can we pray more earnestly that people outside of Winfree Church will know us because we reflect the light of Jesus into our community through our service? Can we humble ourselves more often before God’s throne of grace to receive the gifts that He has to offer us? May we unite as one congregation devoted to following where the Holy Spirit leads us? How will we know where the Holy Spirit leads? We know because we trust God, and the Holy Spirit is one manifestation of His character. We are willing to follow because we put aside our ego and self-interests to yield to the perfected example of how God wants us to love others because we know Jesus through prayer and study of the Gospels plus the other writings in the New Covenant.

Now for the second question to pray over: *What kind of Pastor is God preparing for us to meet the challenges of tomorrow?* Will this Pastor be characterized as a Shepherding Pastor who knows His flock and knows how to prepare the saints at Winfree for service to God? Is there a Bridge Building Pastor awaiting the opportunity to unite us to follow God's Will as He desires for it to be done on earth as it is in heaven? Do we want a gifted Pastor who exceeds as an orator from the pulpit but recognizes that sermons are useful to point the way to God but fall short of building a heartfelt relationship with God? How might we respond to a new Pastor who models Servant Leadership by challenging the laity to recognize and use the gifts that God has given us to serve others? Or will we be looking to identify our new Pastor by knees that are worn out from praying for the Bride of Christ? Oh, we all might say "Amen, we want all of those characteristics for our future Pastor wrapped into one. And if that's your prayer, expect no one less than Christ Jesus to be the one that God sends to us! Are we ready for that?"

What we must be ready for is to commit to praying for our Pastor Search Team, as a unified team and as individuals uniquely contributing to the search process. Please pray for Kitty DeWeese, David Harpe, Dewey Lackner, Jason Sigler, Robin Jenkins, David Krouse, Glenn Maddox, Kevin McGrath, Dan Ogden, Sue Patrick, John Reed, and Abi Rutledge as members of Winfree's Pastor Search Team. Tell them that you are praying for their work in person, via text or email, via SNAIL mail, and in person. Mark your calendars so that you can remember to pray continuously for their important work and the leading of the Holy Spirit on this journey. And be patient, awaiting through prayerful anticipation, the person God will reveal to us as our next Senior Pastor.

*On Day Twenty-one, pray for the important leadership of our Pastor Search Team...*

**1 Corinthians 2:5** *So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

**Ephesians 2:8** *For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*

**Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me..*

**Romans 1:17** *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

**Romans 15:13** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

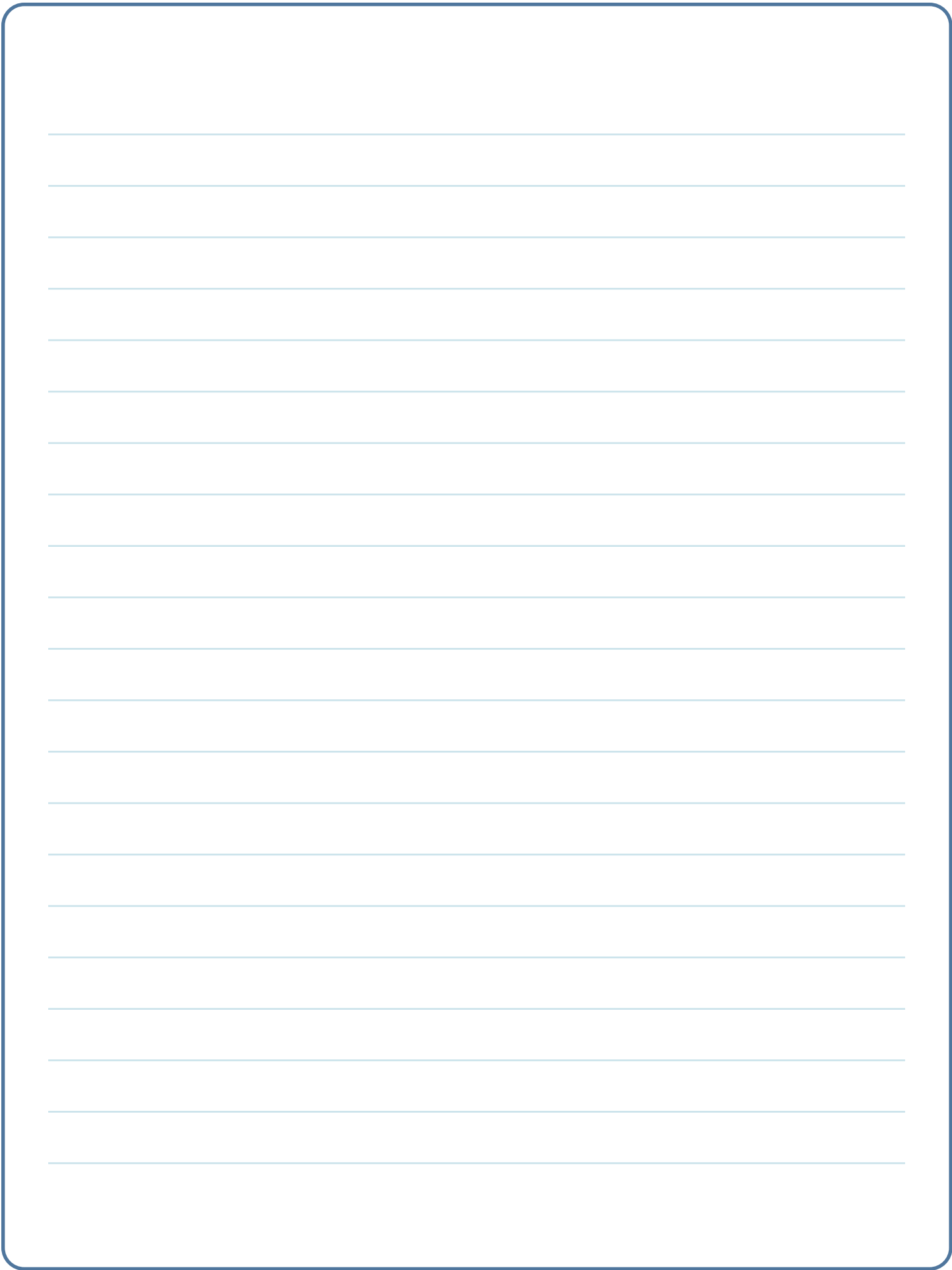
**Luke 18:27** *But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."*

***"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." – 1 John 5:14***

***"We ask that You would teach us to pray according to Your Word. We want to ask You for what You have already purposed to give us, to do for us, and to do through us, yet will not do so until we ask. We don't want to get to Heaven and discover all the answers to prayer for which we never bothered to ask You because we were ignorant of Your Word." – Anne Graham Lotz***









13617 MIDLOTHIAN TURNPIKE  
P.O. BOX 244  
MIDLOTHIAN, VIRGINIA 23113

WINFREECHURCH.ORG  
OFFICE@WINFREECHURCH.ORG  
804-794-5031