

# Stay Alert and Persistent

January 14, 2024 - February 22, 2024

2024



HOLY  
BIBLE

**“Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers...”  
(Ephesians 6:18) NLT**

“What can I do?” It’s a question we all ask, in all kinds of situations. The response we often get is “pray”. It is something we can all do, in any circumstance, at any time, no matter where we are. And it’s the most important thing we can do. So, if we were to ask our search team to tell us what we can do to help them in this process they have undertaken, their response would be “pray”.

Praying is how we share in the work of the team. It’s how they are encouraged. We can hope that they feel the prayers of the body. Remember when you see them to tell them how much we appreciate their work. It’s long, it’s difficult and it can be exhausting and confusing at times, but together we seek the Lord for guidance as this process moves forward. Knowing that the body is praying for them provides them with the fuel they need to continue their work. None of us know when our next shepherd will be identified. Paul reminded Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:22a, “Never be in a hurry about appointing an elder...” Pray that our team does not feel pressured in any way to rush through this process.

But God!! When everything lines up perfectly, “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jeremiah 3:15)  
Waiting is tough, but be assured, God will provide.

**Sunday, January 14, 2024** - Ever notice that when a person sees someone or something as valuable, that person eagerly devotes time, emotional energy and even praise to that something? Think of a rabid football fan or young couples truly in love and this point will be obvious. As we pray for our new senior pastor, remember to approach that request with the same type of devotion as that picture we envisioned of the screaming football fan on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Our prayer is for the Lord to provide just the right person, at just the right time. God has His own sense of timing, and it is perfect. Ecclesiastes 3:11 – “God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.” Trust in Him!

**Monday, January 15, 2024** - By now, some may be entering a time of questioning. Questions like, “What are they doing?”, “When will we have a senior pastor?”, “What’s taking so long?” Solomon wrote in Proverbs 19:2, “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.” It is important for our team to know they have the support of the membership. Not knowing where we are in the process as today’s prayer point is written, it is critical to the unity of the church that we give the team the time and, yes, the space to do the work God has called them to do. Everybody wants to know stuff, but it is critical to the unity and work of the team that we trust the work they are doing. In Bob Lowman, Jr’s book, *Pastor Search: A Prayer Driven Process* he includes the following quote attributed to Chuck Lawless “In my experience, it’s taking longer and longer to find pastors and staff members. The longer it takes, the likelier it is the committee will want to settle for less than the best. That’s dangerous. Trust God through the process and refuse to rush.” Let’s do our part by praying and encouraging our team as they seek God through this process. “God’s man, in God’s time, no exceptions!” (Southern Baptists of Texas Convention). “I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord my God.” (Psalm 38:15)

**Tuesday, January 16, 2024** - Dr. Scott Pace recently shared a message from God’s Word that discussed God’s perfect timing in sending our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to earth to die for our sins. Part of the passage from Galatians 4:4 reads, “When the time had fully come...” God’s timing was perfect. As we join our team in continuing to pray for our next senior pastor, we may be asking, “when will God ever respond to our prayers?” Hey, here’s a thought - we should never doubt Him, and we should never stop praying. At just the right time, He will respond. The same God we trust with our eternity is the same God whose judgment we can trust. He has our best interests in mind. So, when it’s His right time, when the time has fully come, He will bring us together with our next senior pastor. We must wait for God’s perfect timing.

**Wednesday, January 17, 2024** - "Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is useless." (Psalm 127:1). We can do it our way, in our strength, but no matter how much we plan, how much we create and/or conserve, or how hard we work, it makes no sense, and in fact it is futile to try and do anything independently of God. That's why it is so important that we encourage our team to seek the Lord at every step of this process. As their support, as their Aaron and Hur, let's commit to bring them to the Lord every day. Pray for supernatural discernment, with the unity of the Spirit directing the teams' thoughts and decisions. It's encouraging to know that the same God who chose leaders of His people throughout the Bible is the same God who has chosen the next senior pastor for Englewood Baptist Church. We might think we know what it should look like when it's finished, but unless the Lord builds it, the work of any team is useless. Praise the Lord for His guidance!

**Thursday, January 18, 2024** - The Bible says that Peter and the others were in an upstairs room continually praying. They were less than the twelve that Jesus had selected. They knew they had to replace that vacant position. They nominated two men. Our team will look at several candidates before recommending someone to the church. Back in Acts 1:15, the Bible says there were 120 believers present. As our team narrows the field of candidates, let's do what the believers did. In Acts 1: 24 the Bible says, "Then they all prayed for the right man to be chosen. 'O Lord', they said, 'you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen...'" Englewood, it is time for us to knit our hearts together as one. Paul reminded the Colossians in Chapter 2, verse 2, "My goal is that they (the church) will be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love." Lord, knit us together as one. "Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence." (Ephesians 2:2)

**Friday, January 19, 2024** - As our team continues to seek the Lord for guidance in finding our next senior pastor, pray that they would have the eyes of Balaam's donkey. The Bible tells us that Balaam got up in the morning and saddled his donkey to go on the journey with the princes of Moab. The donkey saw an angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. The Bible says the donkey "turned off the road into a field." Three times the donkey saw the angel of the Lord and the danger that Balaam could not see. Pray that the eyes of our team will be as open as the donkey's eyes to any dangers or obstacles any potential prospect might bring to Englewood. Pray that the Lord will open the eyes of our team as he opened Balaam's eyes, if there is a candidate, they are considering that is not God's man for Englewood. (Numbers 22:21-34).

**Saturday, January 20, 2024** - Job 38:23 says, "God surely knows where it can be found, for he looks throughout the whole earth, under all the heavens..." Job was speaking of wisdom. We also know that God knows exactly where our next senior pastor is and who he is. God "found" him before he was even born. It's comforting to know that He knows where this man He has chosen resides. Pray the Lord will reveal this man of God to us. Pray that we don't become complacent knowing that He knows, but that we continue to cry out to the Lord as He prepares both His chosen servant and the saints of Englewood for this next chapter.

**Sunday, January 21, 2024** - "Why?" is a question we are free to ask God. He's not bound to answer. Sometimes He will provide a slight glimpse into His purposes, but not always. Often events in our personal life, and in the life of our church remain a mystery to us. During those times, it is important that we focus on what we do know – the character of God. We can always accept and believe that wisdom and perfection begin with, reside in, and ends with God. Our sovereign God is still in control of our lives and our circumstances. We can trust in His goodness, holiness, compassion, and grace. Lord, help us to trust even when we don't understand or can't get past the why, what, how or when. Pray that we will remember that You are working out Your purposes in our life, both individually and as a church. There are many times Your purposes are way beyond our understanding. Help us to accept your perfect plan and allow your grace to be sufficient for us. "...I will trust in Him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)

**Monday, January 22, 2024** - Pray specifically today for our team. Pray that they will feel the power of the Holy Spirit as they continue seeking the Lord for guidance and affirmation in their work. Pray that they would agree on the way they are conducting their work. Pray that they are sensitive to the direction the Lord is leading them. Pray for harmony among the team. Pray that the prayers of our membership will be united with the prayers of the team. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19,20 – “...if two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask me, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am among them.” As the team gathers, pray they project the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) toward one another and that their request for guidance be of one accord.

**Tuesday, January 23, 2024** - As we begin this day of prayer, let's begin by praising the Lord for all He has done for us - individually and corporately. Before we start spurring out a list of problems or needs, take time to thank Him for all His provision. In other words, spend a little time telling Him how glad you are to be with Him. Pastor Michael use to talk about “Me Me” birds. Today let's take our eyes off our wants and needs and praise the Lord for the abundance we enjoy. In teaching his disciples to pray, Jesus began with, “Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name....” (Matthew 6:9). The first request for something comes later in the prayer, “Gives us this day our daily bread.” In Deuteronomy 32:3, Moses sang, “I will proclaim the name of the Lord, Oh, praise the greatness of our God!” Notice the punctuation at the end of the verse. Not a period, but an exclamation mark. It's exciting to think about the God we serve. Let Him know today how excited you are to bring your praise as well as your petitions. Praise Him!

**Wednesday, January 24, 2024** - In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he wrote about thanksgiving and prayer. In Chapter 1, he commended the people for their faith and love of the gospel. He wrote that he was praying for them “and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” And that they would be “strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...”. He's talking about seeking God's will and waiting for God's answer. He goes on to say that we should give thanks to the Father joyfully. As we “wait” for the Father to reveal His choice for our next senior pastor pray that we would do so joyfully. Paul wrote to the Colossians, “we have not stopped praying for you...” Let's follow Paul's guidance and not stop praying for our team, our church, and our next pastor. And pray that we remain joyful on the journey.

**Thursday, January 25, 2024** - In a recent Word for Today devotional the title was “GOD IS GOOD – ALL THE TIME!” It encouraged us to tell ourselves “God is good - all the time, and to keep saying it until it gets down into your spirit”. The verse for the day was Psalm 34:8 – “See how good the Lord is. Happy is the person who trusts in him.” That's it – happiness comes from trusting in God. In this season at Englewood without a senior pastor we can still know that God is good and the more we trust in him the happier we'll be. He's provided us with a great team of pastors, administrative staff, Connect group leaders and a body of believers who have a heart for Jesus. The devotional went on to say that when we can't see the future, that's when we “must draw on the faith God has deposited in you.” Think about that for a minute. God has deposited faith in us. Remember during the height of COVID we were stocking up on things then pulling from our reserves. God has deposited a reserve of faith in us. That's why we can say with confidence He is good - all the time! Another reason to praise His name.

**Friday, January 26, 2024** - Psalm 23 is most likely the most recognized scripture in the Bible, just after John 3:16. So, as we continue praying for our team and our church, let's rest a few days on this comforting word of God through His servant David. The Psalm begins with “The Lord...”. In Old Testament times a name was not only an identification, but an identity as well. Throughout scripture God reveals himself to us through his names. Jesus prayed, “hallowed be your name, “. To hallow is to make it holy, or to be set apart, or to be exalted. To see as being worthy of absolute devotion. Nehemiah 9:5 – “...Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord.

You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.” Remember, this same Lord that David is praying to in Psalm 23 is the same Lord who we are praying to today. Asking Him to guide us to our next pastor. Praise the Almighty (El Shaddai), the Most High God (El Elyon).

**Saturday, January 27, 2024** - “The Lord is...” Several years ago, one of our former Presidents said something like “it depends on what the meaning of the word ‘is’, is.” We can be assured, without confusion or misdirection, what Psalm 23:1 means when it says, “The Lord is...” He is our Master (Adonai) and The Everlasting God (El Olam). Because He is, we know that the Lord is our Jehovah Jireh (The Lord will Provide). We can have confidence in Jehovah Jireh to provide the next senior pastor for Englewood Baptist Church. As we continue this time of prayer, never forget who we are asking to provide. We are asking a Holy God, our Master (Adonai), the creator of our universe, the God of the Bible to stir in the heart of our future pastor. We are asking the same God who gave us His word through the Bible, to reveal to our team where and who this man of God is that will shepherd us. Ask the Lord to be with him and his family. Pray for God’s call on his ministry to be as clear and as definitive as the beginning of Psalm 23:1 – “The Lord is ...”

**Sunday, January 28, 2024** - The Lord is ‘my’...” Here is where this well-known passage of scripture becomes personal. Very early in the Psalm, David is declaring that the Lord is his, “The Lord is my...” He’s mine! David uses “my”, “me” or “mine”, nine times in these six verses. Add the four “I’s” and we have ten times that David has made known how personal this prayer is to him. It’s a personal prayer, not a generic piece of literature that we read over and over. It’s been said when we pray God’s word back to Him, it’s pleasing to Him and a blessing to us. Isaiah 55:11, “...so is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Yes, the Psalm is personal, but it’s “our” Psalm as well. Ask Him YAHWEH (Jehovah) as our Lord to reveal His man for EBC. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful” - Hebrews 10:23.

**Monday, January 29, 2024** - There is not a “their” in this Psalm. It very clearly says, “The Lord is my Shepherd”. David was emphasizing that if no one else claimed Him as their Shepherd, no worries, He is a Shepherd to me. David was direct and confident in his words. David was comforted and felt secure in knowing that Jehovah-Raah (The Lord my Shepherd) cared for him like a shepherd would care for his sheep. That same Lord is the same God who we call on today to watch over us and protect us during this time at Englewood. While we are without an identified senior pastor, we can trust Jehovah-Raah to watch over us, to protect us and to provide for us during this time of waiting. Pray for our team to sense the leading and guiding of the Lord as they claim Him as their Shepherd. Pray that our pastor (in waiting) has declared that the Lord is his shepherd and as one of His sheep, knows His voice and feels His prompting to move this way to serve at EBC. Hey, God has not left us without a shepherd. We can find comfort in knowing that Jehovah-Raah (The Lord my Shepherd) is watching over us.

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024** - The second part of Verse 1 of Psalm 23 goes like this, “I shall not want.” We really must stop for a minute to think about the decision to make a statement like that. It’s a declaration of total dependence on the Shepherd. The Lord supplies all my needs, and I have decided that my desires are not more than what the Lord my shepherd has given me. As we think about our next pastor, let’s stop to thank the Good Shepherd for supplying all our needs. He has given us a precious group of pastors and administrative staff who have sought the Great Shepherd in all their decisions in leading EBC through this time. The Lord has given us a godly team of people that we know as our “search team” to consider prayerfully and thoughtfully those who have expressed interest in serving as our next senior pastor. Lord, we shall not want, but instead wait on you to provide. Remember Philippians 4:19? “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” – The Shepherd.

**Wednesday, January 31, 2024** - We have Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Gen Z's in our membership. All those age differences create diversity and differences in thought. Regardless of age and defined groups we can all call ourselves members of the "microwave generation". We want things fast, we want things hot, and we want things now. During these times of waiting, we can become impatient (think Walmart). Thank the Lord for the visual we have in Psalm 23:2, "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." It's a picture of the shepherd calming his sheep. It's also a revelation that the sheep don't know what they need, or what's best for them, so they rely on the shepherd to provide. He knows where the green pastures and the quiet waters are that will restore us. It's a reminder that He knows where the next man of God is that will lead Englewood. Pray for that same image of peace for our team, for our new pastor, and the membership of Englewood. The same God who spoke the need to rest to David is the same God who will provide rest for us during this time of waiting.

**Thursday, February 1, 2024** - Psalm 23:3 reads "...he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The care the shepherd had provided in verse two had its intended effect. The peacefulness of the green pasture and quiet waters restored David's soul. In one of Dr. Pace's messages in November 2023, he reminded us of what contentment is. Paul said he had learned the secret of being content. He wrote in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Through "him" was what Paul said. When we allow God, our shepherd, to guide us, we have contentment. David wrote in Psalm 5:8, "Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness..." Do you think the sheep knew where the green pastures or the still waters were? No. All the sheep needed to know was where the shepherd was. God is a caring shepherd and a dependable guide. Lord, we call on you as our caring and dependable guide to lead us to the next earthly shepherd for Englewood Baptist Church. Show our team the right path to follow "for your name's sake."

**Friday, February 2, 2024** - Let's think about verse four as a gift of the Shepherd's presence. "...for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Even though we see this time at Englewood as a challenge without a senior pastor, we know through this verse that we are not left to fend for ourselves. This is what the Lord said through Isaiah. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior..." (Isaiah 43:2,3). No horses or chariots, no boats, no fire hoses; just a rod and staff and His Word; His presence. We can feel like we're drowning when we go through difficult times – personally and as a church family. But those times may also force us to grow stronger. If we move forward in our own strength, we are more likely to drown. Let's continue to invite the Lord to go with us, to make us stronger as we continue this journey. His presence will guide and protect us.

**Saturday, February 3, 2024** - It's been written that "believers are never pictured in Scripture as mighty lions, independent and self-sufficient; rather, they are sheep who are dependent on their Shepherd for His provision and protection." We are dependent sheep, but we are more than just dependent sheep. As it is written in Psalm 23:5a, the Lord "prepares a table before me..." Since the Lord prepared a table for us, we can be considered honored guests. The Lord prepared the table "...in the presence of my enemies." Spurgeon writes, "nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace." Lord, we know Satan is a disruptor and he wants everything to be hurried and confused. Help our team and those of us who are praying with them to stand on the promise that you've got this, and for us to get the picture of you calmly setting the table as we wait for you to serve up the man of God you have prepared for Englewood.

**Sunday, February 4, 2024** - "You anoint my head with oil: my cup overflows." Can you see David sitting there with the Lord, David's shepherd, anointing his head with oil? We can experience that same refreshing experience that David enjoyed if we only take time to get still in the presence of our Lord. The second part of verse five shows us how much David had settled into his place at the table the Lord had prepared for him. He had begun to understand the goodness of the protection and the provisions of the Lord. So much so that he said, "my cup overflows." As you pray today, seek the peace of the Lord. Remember all His protection and provision as you think about how He has watched over EBC since its beginning. He is continuing to fill our cup. Ask Him to provide an earthly shepherd to guide us in the days to come.

**Monday, February 5, 2024** - In the first section of verse six, David makes this statement, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." In the former verses, David has come to understand the complete, dependable, and caring nature of "The Lord." Despite all that may have happened in the past, David is looking forward to the rest of the days of his life, knowing that "The Lord" is his shepherd. Because we confess the Lord is our shepherd, let's focus on what the future will bring through the "goodness and mercy" of the Lord. It starts with our continuous, daily, sometimes by the minute prayers for God to reveal to us who He has chosen to guide Englewood. A period of waiting can become frustrating, yet "this is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him." (Isaiah 30:15a,18). Find the goodness and mercy of the Lord in this time of searching and waiting.

**Tuesday, February 6, 2024** - "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life" would have been a beautiful, encouraging ending to Psalm 23. But David adds the word "and," letting us know there is more to come. It's like a blessing for the future. "...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." He began the Psalm by telling us who the Lord is during his life on earth. He ends the Psalm by telling us where he will dwell "forever." It's confirmation that the care of the Lord never stops for one of His children. In the same way, the Lord's caring for His bride, the church, never ceases. We know that our heavenly shepherd has chosen an earthly shepherd for Englewood. Pray for our team, our church and our next senior pastor and his family. "And" remember "The Lord is..."

**Wednesday, February 7, 2024** - Remember earlier when we talked about patience in waiting? In many examples of waiting the name of Walmart is mentioned. It's the long lines, the limited staff, and the fact that we have finished shopping, now all the free movement we had while shopping has been narrowed down to those little stalls called the checkout line. Let's for just a minute change the location to Chic-fil-A. YES!! We still wait in a line, but because there is something really good at the end of the line, we don't seem to mind waiting as much. It's really all about what's at the end. The dread of the little stall at Walmart or the anticipation of the little nuggets at Chic-fil-A. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret..." (Psalm 37:7). As we pray and wait (in anticipation), remember to celebrate who the Lord has appointed to be our next shepherd; he will be just one of the nuggets God has provided for Englewood throughout the life of the church.

**Thursday, February 8, 2024** - Spurgeon wrote, "A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy." Spurgeon's statement was referencing David's writing in Psalm 122. David had written, "Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together." What Jerusalem was to David and the Israelites, the church is to the believer. At all times, and especially during these days, we need to be "closely compacted together" as a body of believers. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "I appeal to you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." Pray that we will come together with the recommendation of our team when that time comes. Pray that we will work together in harmony because we agree in what truly matters - Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Spurgeon finished his quote with these words, "They greatly injure our Jerusalem, who would build walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing." Pray there will be no walls, no division in our Jerusalem (our church), but that we'd be "closely compacted together."

**Friday, February 9, 2024** - "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says." (Rev 2:11). Pray that we'd all join in praying for our team as they walk through this time of seeking God's direction for our new senior pastor. Pray that we'd all quiet our spirit and develop a listening ear to what God is revealing. Pray that we don't allow other voices, snares, or hindrances to get in the way of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. "He that has an ear, let him hear" is repeated sixteen times in the New Testament. Through God's Word the Holy Spirit speaks to us, guiding our thoughts and actions to align with God's will. Pray our team and our new senior pastor are quieting themselves and listening for "what the Spirit says."

**Saturday, February 10, 2024** - The Bible says that the Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern tribes had settled in the Valley of Jezreel. In Judges 6:34 the Bible says, "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon..." Focus on the first word of the verse, "Then". All things were lined up. Everyone was in their place. It was at the right time. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon..." As the team (and as a reminder, that includes all of us) continues their work, pray that their hearts continue to be knit together in this process. Pray the heart of our new senior pastor begins to hear what the Spirit is saying about his work being complete in his current assignment. As all these things begin to line up, pray that the Spirit of the Lord comes upon the team to say, "this is the man". Pray that the new senior pastor will have ears to hear the Spirit releasing him from his current role to serve as shepherd at Englewood.

**Sunday, February 11, 2024** - Gideon sought God's assurance through a wet fleece and dry ground on night one. God answered. On night two Gideon asked for a dry fleece and wet ground. God answered. Gideon wanted assurances that God was going to save Israel by his hand as He had promised. Like Gideon, we often look for signs of God's assurance. Thankfully, we have these stories to show us that God keeps His promises. So, we can be assured, by faith that God hears our prayers. "...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." (Hebrews 10:22). As we lift our requests to God for a senior pastor, let's remember what Jesus said in John 16:24, "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

**Monday, February 12, 2024** - Gideon had just witnessed this thing with the fleece. Imagine Gideon's joy when he had the assurance that God was with him. He was positioning himself for the attack. He was about to attack an enemy that was described as thick as locusts. Their camels couldn't be counted because they were like sand on the seashore. And the Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men..." (Judges 7:2). WHAT? We know the story. God whittled them down from 3,000 to 300. Now, put yourselves in Gideon's sandals. You're looking at this large army you are about to attack. You have three hundred men. And the Lord says, "If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying." (Judges 7:10,11). Now think about the enormity of the situation our team faces as they reach out in search of a new pastor for Englewood. So many things to consider. The importance of the recommendation on the life of Englewood. In today's environment is this the right man? Are we missing something? Have we excluded the man God has chosen? They may feel like they're looking at a swarm of locusts at times trying to see where the Lord is guiding them. Pray continually that our team is listening "...to what they (candidates) are saying."

**Tuesday, February 13, 2024** - So, Gideon goes down with his servant and he begins to listen. The Bible says, "Gideon arrived just as the man was telling a friend his dream. 'I had a dream', he was saying. A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." (Judges 7:13) Now in everyday conversation that dream is just as clear as mud, right? But under the anointing of God, it happened at just the right time (Gideon arrived just as the man was telling the story). Gideon was in just the right place (amongst all those soldiers as thick as locusts) to hear the conversation. And to hear that a small barley cake could roll into the camp and destroy a tent. Makes perfect sense, right? Not without the clarity of a Holy God. God told Gideon to go down into the camp and "...listen to what they are saying. Afterward you will be encouraged." Pray for our team to listen to what the candidates are saying and that when the team is in the right place at the right time, they will hear from the Lord, with clarity, "This is the man." Lord, we pray you will



give our team extra sensitive hearing and comprehension as they listen to the words of the applicants. Let our team hear the heart of the candidates and let us walk through this with them as Purah walked with Gideon.

**Wednesday, February 14, 2024** - How significant is the smallest detail in a story? Before we leave Gideon, let's for just a few minutes drill down on the event at the camp. It's dark. It could have seemed like a suicide mission. Gideon must have been afraid, because the Lord said, "If you are afraid..." go down to the camp. These barley loaves were made from cheap grain and yet the impact of this little loaf "...overturned and collapsed" the tent. God promised Gideon that he would be encouraged by what he heard. The Lord planted this dream in the mindset of those soldiers. Remember when Jesus fed the 5,000? In John 6:9, Andrew said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves..." Sometimes we can overlook the smallest things that may have the most impact. The wax moth is identified as having the best hearing in the animal world. Pray that our team will have the hearing of a wax moth as they listen to our candidates speak. Pray that our team will have the vision of an owl as they vet the candidate's background. And pray that our team will be encouraged by what they hear.

**Thursday, February 15, 2024** - As we lift our team in prayer, let's remember to thank them for all the work they are doing for us. They are sacrificing lots of time away from family to do this work. While Gideon was doing the work to fight the enemy there were others sitting back after the battles asking things like "...Why didn't you call us...?" (Judges 8:1). They weren't recognizing the work that had been done, but criticizing the workers because they didn't call them. Our team is representing all of us, just as Gideon was representing the Israelites. Pray for the team and for all the membership of Englewood to act as one body, in a spirit of unity and harmony. The Bible calls us to be in unity with ourselves (1 Peter 3:8), in unity with all the followers of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:10), and maintain the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3)

**Friday, February 16, 2024** - Ever play that game as a child when the first kid whispered something into the ear of the next child, and it went around the circle? When the message got to the end it was something entirely different. That normally happens with us adults too if we're not intentional in our listening. We're often trying to think of what "I'm" going to say when engaged in a conversation rather than listening to what the other person is saying. Pray that as our team reaches out to candidates that they'll be listening to every little detail in order that they can feel encouraged in their work. Pray for the strength of the Lord to be with them as they continue this journey. "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

**Saturday, February 17, 2024** - Pray for perseverance. The testing and the waiting that we have been going through only serves to develop our faith. As James writes in James 1:2-4, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete..." Perseverance, patience or steadfastness are words used in different translations. As we've seen, the search process takes time. Patience is a great teacher. It produces growth and maturity. The growth and maturity that we gain from waiting on God will always be to our benefit. Continue praying for our church. Pray that the growth and maturity we experience during this time of waiting will be reflected in our worship. Pray our new pastor will be blessed by our faith in the Lord as he learns about our journey.

**Sunday, February 18, 2024** - "When I can't see, You lead me. When I can't hear, You show me. When I can't stand, You carry me. When I'm lost, You will find me, When I'm weak, You are mighty. You are everything I need." These are the words in a song by Lauren Daigle. The title of the song is "Everything." It's a good word for us to remember. God gives us everything we need at just the right time. Peter said it like this, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Peter 1:3). The same God who created "everything", the same God who "called us by his own glory and goodness" is the same God who, today, is watching over us and providing everything we need. He is everything we need.

**Monday, February 19, 2024** - God is a great provider. Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides, gives us what we need. Remember how He made garments for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21)? How about the way in which He laid out the plans for the ark and gave Noah the skills to build it (Genesis 6:14-16)? Or when Isaac asked his father, Abraham, "...but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." (Genesis 22:7,8). Think about our journey and how He has provided. He assembled a team of pastors who as a part of Englewood have carried on the work of the Lord during this time without a senior pastor. God built relationships between our church and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary that have been a blessing to Englewood. He provided a Pastor Emeritus in Pastor Michael who has been a tremendous resource for our team, our Deacon Council, and our church. He has provided a team of deacons who have stepped up to fill in the gaps where needed. Things may not happen, or come, when we think it should, but God. "But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19). Today, thank the Lord for His provision.

**Tuesday, February 20, 2024** - Peter reminded us in 2 Peter 5:8 to "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Remember those old Wild Kingdom shows? They often followed a lion's pride as they moved about hunting for food. One show featured a family of elephants. One of the lion's tactics was dividing the herd. The lions were trying to attack one of the baby elephants. It was amazing to watch the adults circle around the baby to keep the lions away from the youngest. That's it! They circled around the most vulnerable to protect it from danger. It's a picture for us as well. One of Satan's most powerful weapons is division. We often use the phrase, "put a hedge of protection" around someone or something when we pray. Let's circle around each other like that family of elephants did to protect a member of the family from the lion pride. Together we are strong, separated we are vulnerable to attack. The same God who protected Daniel when he was in a den of lions is the same God who provides our protection as we move forward in our search for a new shepherd. In the meantime, we should all be on guard like sheep dogs to keep the wolves and lions out of our flock.

**Wednesday, February 21, 2024** - Does the name George de Mestral mean anything to you? One word will tell you all you need to know – Velcro. George would take walks through the woods with his dog and what we would call a cockle burr here in Nash County would stick to them. Long story short, he invented a product that we would come to know as Velcro. What does that have to do with praying for a preacher? We all know how Velcro sticks. It's a reminder to us that we are in a spot where we, the people of Englewood, need to really stick together at this phase in the search. We can become distracted by the time it is taking. We may tend to not be as urgent in our prayers as we were in the beginning because other things are on our radars. Continue praying fervently as the body of Christ. "Now, you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

**Thursday, February 22, 2024** - So, as we end these 40 days of prayer, let's look at Jehoshaphat and what he did in the face of a difficult situation in 2 Chronicles, Chapter 20. Enemies came to make war with Jehoshaphat. The reporters called them "a vast army." Verse 4 says, "The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord..." It's a reminder that we, the people of Englewood, need to come together to seek help from the Lord. Jehoshaphat didn't start his prayer by telling God what he needed. He began by acknowledging how big and mighty God had been throughout the history of His people (verses 6 – 9). Then he brought their troubles to the Lord (verses 10 – 12). Then they went out to fight. NO!! The Bible says, "All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord." (2 Chronicles 20:13) That's not what we normally do. It goes against our nature. Doing is more productive than standing, right? The Bible goes further to say that a Levite named Jahaziel received a word from the Lord. This is what the Lord said, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:15). We should, like Jehoshaphat, remember how big and mighty God is and all that He has done throughout the history of Englewood. We should involve our families in this time of prayer to seek God's will for our church. And we should pray for our team as they prayerfully seek the Lord, and His direction, as we stand together before Him. It's comforting knowing that this battle, this search for a new senior pastor, is not ours, "...but God's".



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