

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

YOUTH DEVOTIONAL



THE ALLIANCE



ALLIANCE YOUTH

40 DAYS OF prayer

INTRO

Dear Alliance family,

Welcome to 40 Days of Prayer! This prayer guide features daily devotionals and prayer prompts that are designed to lead you into the presence of God, to cry out to Him in prayer, and to listen for His still, small voice. It's not enough to hear about prayer, read about it, or even just learn about it. During these 40 days at the beginning of 2022, we need to engage in prayer—to perhaps do so with a frequency, fervency, and focus that is not normal for us. This year's theme is **Reawakening to Christ**. The aim of this 40-day focus is to fix our gaze on Jesus: remember who He is, what He has done, what He has given us to do, and what He will do in the future.

Look around at all that is happening in our nation and world. It is time to pray and to surrender to Jesus! Could it be that this 40 Days of Prayer could change us, change our prayer lives, change The Alliance, and even transform our nation and world? Let's step into this prayer experience with the anticipation that we will encounter the living God and fix our eyes upon Him. Let's pray with a spirit of expectancy that the Spirit of God will do great things in, among, and through us to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Keep the faith!



Terry D. Smith
Vice President for Church Ministries



THE ALLIANCE

40 DAYS
OF *prayer*

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WEEK 1

REAWAKENING TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST

During His Incarnation, the glory of Christ is often veiled, and we see His humility. But His glory has existed from eternity past and will continue into eternity future. Even during His Incarnation, His glory is seen from time to time. This week's devotionals unpack various aspects of the glory of Christ so that we will find ourselves caught up in worship.

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THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST

JOHN 1:1-4, 14

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus didn't just come into existence when He was born? He existed from the very beginning, and He has continued to exist even after His physical death—Jesus is eternal!

If you've ever played peek-a-boo with a young child, you've witnessed a developmental theory at work called object permanence. This is the ability to know that an object still exists even if it cannot be seen. Infants who haven't yet developed object permanence will become upset when an object is hidden from sight because they think the item has vanished.

In the same way, if we are not developed enough in our faith to know that Christ is eternal, we can become upset when bad things happen in life because we think that He's vanished, that He's left us. But Christ is eternal, and it is a glorious promise to know that He has always been there and He will always be there with us. We can rest and confidently live life knowing that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). He is worthy of all our affection!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask Jesus to show you moments where He's been beside you in the past and the present. Does Jesus' presence change anything? Spend time praising Him for this revelation!
2. Have Jesus show you where He desires to be beside you in the future. Does His presence change anything? How? Journal your thoughts, and date the page. Commit these moments to Him so you can look back on it later.
3. Find a way to declare/express Isaiah 9:6—through calligraphy, art, writing poems or songs, declaring truth, dancing, journaling, etc.

» by Abi Arkawa

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2:8-9

Pray before you read: *Holy Spirit, help me understand Your Word. May this time together be glorifying to You—draw me closer to You. May I see Your work in this passage and in the day ahead of me.*

I have often wondered when the grumpy, old people in my church started being grumpy. What started them down the grumpy path? Why would they get so upset about a new song on Sunday morning? Then, one Sunday, the Holy Spirit convicted me. We were singing “Reckless Love” again, and I couldn’t do it. I mean, come on. How many times are we going to sing this song? I heard the Spirit say to me, “You’re not the one they’re worshiping.”

Oof, it’s true. I had lost the purpose of why we worship. I became a grumpy, old person caught up in the belief that I was the point and that my enjoyment of worship was the purpose. Verse 8 warns us of being taken captive like this by tradition rather than Christ.

Is there a tradition in your life that may have started out as something good but lost the purpose of bringing Christ the glory? It could be the reason you go to youth group, read your Bible, or the way you treat your friends.

Verse 9 talks about Jesus, in full deity, taking bodily form. The all-powerful being who created life with a breath bound Himself to the squishy human body—a body that is easily changed and damaged but also a body that couldn’t stop Him from miraculously healing the blind, the bleeding, and the dead or bearing the weight and pain of the cross.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank Jesus for being worthy of all your glory, honor, and praise.
2. Ask God to show you more of His goodness.
3. Pray that He will reveal to you more of how you can better worship Him and Him alone.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 4:14-16

For this devotional, begin outside. Look around at the environment that surrounds you.

In the Old Testament, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year to burn incense and sprinkle animal blood to atone for his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. The high priests in the Old Testament sacrificed but could not fulfill nor provide the sacrifice all mankind needed.

Jesus—God in the flesh—walked, lived, worshiped, wrestled, and overcame the issues of this life while being with people. Jesus was familiar with temptation and the struggles of man. In His life, He did not sin. He was, is, and forever will be the great High Priest, the ultimate sacrifice to atone for our sins.

You may be wondering, “What does this have to do with me? I am not God. I cannot live a sinless life.” What you do have is Christ living inside you.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. What do you believe about God? Pray that He will reveal to you the truths from His Word you can hold firm to.
2. How do you make it through the temptations and struggles of this world? Ask the Lord to help you seek after Him before all else.
3. What do you do when you fail or don't feel good enough? Pray that the Lord will show you His goodness and grace and help you trust in His promises and His love for you.

» by Joe Oliver

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

MATTHEW 17:1-8

Have you ever gone on a long hike with friends or family? There's just something special about being in nature away from our sometimes- hectic everyday lives. This passage starts off with Jesus and a couple of the disciples doing just that—hiking up a mountain.

This seemed to be a normal hike for Peter, James, and John, an opportunity to relax and spend some quality time with Jesus. But within minutes of finally reaching the top of the mountain, some crazy things happened. Jesus' face shone like the sun, Moses and Elijah appeared, the voice of God spoke to them from a cloud, and the disciples fell on their faces in fear.

By the time it was all over, the disciples were left with a new understanding of Jesus. They were able to see just a glimpse of His glory and were given a command: "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him."

Much like the disciples, sometimes we need a reminder to listen to Jesus. It can be easy for us to focus on what we want rather than what Jesus is saying. It can be easy for us to turn our relationship with Jesus into a one-way street where we make requests but don't listen to what He has to say. Today, set aside intentional time during prayer to listen to what God has for you.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Think about a time when you have seen God move. Praise Him for the ways He's worked in your life in the past.
2. Pray that God will give you a deeper understanding of His glory today.
3. Find a quiet place away from distractions. Put your phone on airplane mode. Set a timer for eight minutes and put it facedown or across the room from you. Pray that God will speak to you, and then listen to Him until your timer goes off. Keep a notebook and pen handy to write down what He says.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

ACTS 1:9-11

Have you ever encountered something difficult that left you saying, “I don’t get it. Why is this happening?” Often, it’s hard to grasp what God is up to when things happen that leave us wounded or when life is overwhelming and we can’t help but feel anxious.

Jesus’ closest friends spent years with Him—walked with Him, heard Him teach, watched in awe as He performed miracle after miracle. Think about the fun you have with your best friends. That’s what the disciples had with Jesus. And then Jesus told them He was going to die.

Jesus died to pay for the sins of the world and defeated Satan and darkness forever. His friends and followers didn’t understand, and they were devastated. But Jesus didn’t stay dead. Conquering death, Jesus came back to life! He returned! And then He told them He had to leave again. The disciples watched as Jesus disappeared into the sky.

“Why is He leaving? He *just* came back,” they must have thought.

Little did they know, this was a launching pad for the explosion of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus had told them it was better for Him to leave so that “the Helper” could come. Ten days later, the Holy Spirit came in their midst and filled them.

Even today, we receive the Holy Spirit when we come to faith in Jesus (see Acts 2:38). Jesus physically left the earth, but now inhabits His people by His Spirit.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. The glory of Christ is displayed in His power, His love for us, and His goodness even when we don’t understand what He is doing. Ask God to reveal Himself to you in new ways today.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you place your trust in Him.
3. Ask that the Lord will help you place all of your hope in Him and nothing else.

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN GLORY

MATTHEW 24:30-31

If you're like me, you read the passage and thought, "This is a little scary." I mean, the passage says that "there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth." Does it really mean *all* people?

The mourning described in the passage is for people who have rebelled against and rejected a relationship with Jesus. However, for those who know Him and are in relationship with Him, this is the moment our souls have been longing for—the time where Jesus finally comes back to earth to gather His children and bring us home. This passage of Scripture is one of hope in the power of Jesus and His love for us. It's something to look forward to, a time of eternal rest with our Father.

I can't help but be reminded of vacation and the hopeful excitement I feel as I await its arrival. Oftentimes, when my wife and I have a summer vacation scheduled out, and it's been a hard winter at work in Pennsylvania, my heart smiles knowing that a restful time in Florida is right around the corner. Like the return of Jesus, I have not experienced it yet, but the hope of vacation provides rest for me even before it happens. It's a hope not only for the future but for my present life.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what resting with Him looks like.
2. Pray that He will give you a better idea of what it means to find your rest in Him.
3. Ask God to help you rest in His love today and build hope for His coming tomorrow.

» by Devonte Thorne

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Exaltation is the action of elevating someone in rank, power, or character. It is a feeling or state of extreme happiness.

Exaltation of anything brings excitement. Think of a time when you or someone you know was given an award. They stood up on a stage or platform and were handed a certificate or medal or gift to honor their work, their character, or their strength—what a great feeling. The crowd went wild and cheered, joining in the celebration.

Jesus' exaltation was even more glorious than that except it occurred only in the unseen world of heaven. To the human eye, His "exaltation" was anything but—it was dirty, bloody, tiresome, lonely, and discouraging. The emotions He had when He humbled Himself in obedience were nothing celebratory or exciting. The time for His exaltation was moments away in heaven.

Can you think of a time when you did something wonderful, but nobody saw? For Jesus, heaven saw. Serving others is the sum of what Jesus dedicated His life to on earth. He came to serve—He served meals, healing, and forgiveness for all. How can you humble yourself to that of a servant today?



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that the Lord will give you a posture of gratitude for showing you His goodness.
2. Pray for strength to follow in the service of Jesus.
3. Pray for others to experience the deep love of God.

» by Annie Banceu

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 2

REAWAKENING TO THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

This week, we will focus on various aspects of Christ's Incarnation—from birth to death and Resurrection. We will turn our eyes to focus on the person of Jesus in all of His glory and continuously pray for deeper understanding of who He is.

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THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

LUKE 2:1-20

Having meditated on the eternal glory of Christ, the Incarnation of Christ can seem a bit confusing and even underwhelming. Why did the Creator of the universe choose to come to earth as a baby? What is it about the birth of Christ that prompted the angels to sing, the shepherds to go and tell, and Mary to treasure and ponder? The story of Jesus' birth told year after year can be easily rehearsed and, therefore, is constantly in danger of missing how the birth of Christ reveals to us the nature of the invisible God.

Jesus was born as an infant—vulnerable and in need of caring parents to wrap Him tight, feed Him, and give Him a place to lay His head. The One from whom all things were made came in the humble form of an infant.

Mary had a special connection to Jesus. Their lives were intimately connected in a beautiful way. Mary, as a mother, pondered and treasured this relationship that she had with the infant Jesus. And though she was the mother to Jesus, she knew that this baby was the One who came to take care of her deepest spiritual and eternal needs.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Take the next few minutes and pause to consider how Jesus humbly came in the flesh so that He would be united with you personally. Ask yourself the question, "Do I believe that Jesus wants to be intimately connected to me?"
2. Spend time, like the angels did, praising God for being pleased to send Jesus to offer us a personal relationship with Him.
3. Ask the Lord to reveal to you one person you can joyfully share the wonderful news of Jesus with.

» by Ryan Sullivan

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

LUKE 4:1-13

Have you ever eaten just one potato chip? It's incredibly hard. For most of us, after the first chip goes the second, and before you know it, the whole bag is finished! Temptations—whether big or small—are challenging to overcome, especially when they look appealing and when we feel alone in the challenge.

Jesus understands our dilemma. In Luke 4:1–13, we read about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness during forty days of fasting.

After days of fasting, you know the craving was real for Jesus! Yet, Jesus was able to overcome the temptations of the devil because He had two powerful weapons with Him. First, in verse 1, we find that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not alone because He had the power of the Holy Spirit within Him. Second, Jesus knew Scripture, which enabled Him to combat the devil at every turn.

If we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, which means we have the same power living in us to help us overcome temptation. Memorizing Scripture and spending time reading the Word of God helps us to fight back any temptation we may face. Even when we give into temptation, when we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9).



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Think about areas of your life where you face temptations. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you might be facing temptation now.
2. If you have given into temptation, take a moment to confess your sins to God.
3. Ask the Lord to help you trust that He loves you and is faithful to forgive.

» by Alison Ibanez

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

MARK 1:35-39

Let's imagine that it's early Saturday morning, still dark. You're completely exhausted from being out way too late the night before with friends after a football game. As you lay there half asleep, you suddenly remember that today is the day. Your childhood best friend is back in town! You've missed them so much since their dad had to take a job several states away two years ago. After weeks of planning, you both have convinced your parents to let them tag along on one of their dad's business trips so you could meet up.

The problem is the only time you can meet is early this morning. You're completely exhausted, but it doesn't really matter. You jump out of bed, quickly get ready, and head out to meet them for breakfast. A few hours only feel like a couple minutes, but it's so nice just to spend time talking and catching up. Soon it's time to go, but you are desperately looking forward to the next time that you can talk together.

In this passage, we get a glimpse into the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus loved spending time with His Father. Even though He was probably always physically exhausted from helping people, He found time to sneak away and pray. His personal comfort was secondary to a deep longing to connect with God alone.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Do you want the same love for prayer that Jesus had? If so, ask God for it right now.
2. Jesus understands feeling pressure from others, but He didn't let that distract Him from praying and keeping focused on His calling. List some things that distract you from your prayer time. Offer these things to God and ask Him to help you focus.
3. Jesus went to a solitary place to pray. Find a spot where you can pray daily without distraction. Practice praying there this week.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

MATTHEW 9:9-10

As a tax collector, Matthew would have been among the most reviled people in town. As a Jew who collected taxes from other Jews, he was surely loathed by his own people. He was also not exactly loved or respected by the Romans—he was still a Jew after all. The money was awfully good though.

Once he had collected enough taxes for Rome, anything extra he could squeeze out of the people was his to keep. Tax collecting made for a good living but, as it turns out, not for a very good social life. Maybe this is why Matthew was willing to leave it behind and follow Jesus after hearing just two words: “Follow me.”

I wonder if you have ever felt like Matthew—caught between two worlds, never quite fitting in, wanting something this world has to offer so badly that you would trade in something sacred, only to realize it could never satisfy.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Take a moment to be still and ask God what you can leave behind so that you can better follow Jesus.
2. While you are at school or out in public today, put your phone down and look around. Pray for the people you see who may be feeling abandoned and disconnected like Matthew.
3. Pray that God will stir in their hearts a desire to follow Him—maybe they are waiting on an invitation from someone like you.

» by Duane Richards

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

LUKE 7:11-17

Have you ever felt invisible—like nobody sees you? I wonder if this is how the widow in today's story felt. Though she was surrounded by a large crowd of mourners as they carried her only son, now dead, on a stretcher through the town, nobody knew she was mourning far more than just him.

The memories of the same procession come flooding back, only it was her husband on the stretcher. The crowd would soon leave, and she would return home alone with no support or financial means. Her future would likely include begging for food at risk of being taken advantage of by robbers who knew she was weak. I bet she felt invisible.

But someone saw her—Jesus. He saw not only her outward appearance of sadness and grief, but He saw her heart and her story and “his heart broke.” His plea for her to stop crying may have seemed insensitive until His next statement was directed at the son: “Young man, I say to you, get up!” Can you imagine the shock and awe?

He sees you, too. In fact, He's always seen you. The very reason He came to earth was for you. Just like the dead son on the stretcher could do nothing to help himself, neither can you or I. We are dead in our sin and need His sacrifice on the cross and resurrecting power to pull us off the stretcher. Celebrate today that He sees you and has compassion on you. Roll off the stretcher and let others see the miracle of the life you've been given.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Spend time thanking Jesus that He sees you while you are still a sinner.
2. Have you felt invisible? What troubles do you need to give to Jesus today? Ask Him to reveal Himself to you.
3. As you ride the bus, walk into the cafeteria, or sit in class, ask Jesus to help you to see others as He sees them.

THE ATONING DEATH OF CHRIST

LUKE 23:44-46

Jesus is our atonement! Paul not only explains the human condition in Romans, but the Law's requirement. He wrote this with an understanding of the Old Testament's requirement for blood atonement. This sacrifice of Jesus—taking on our sin and dying in our place—brought about the atonement of our sins. There is a price to pay for sin, and the price was, and will always be, death.

In the Old Testament, this death was signified in the sacrifice of the prized lamb. Numbers 28:3–8 describes the atoning sacrifice that was required by God's Law. Christ was the perfect lamb. In a court of law, we are worthy of the death penalty. Yet Jesus, through His death, saved us from the guilty verdict by becoming our justifier. Jesus took my guilt so that I could be free and so that I could be made right with the Lord.

When Christ died, the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn, which means that we who believe can now have full access to the presence of God because He, the perfect lamb, took away our sins and made us pure. The fall took away our access to the presence; but Christ, through His death and Resurrection, restored our access!

God is here, and God is with us! He desires to heal our wounds, our bodies, and our souls. He loves us and cares for us. Even though He's seen the depths of our hearts, He loves us the same. His plan is to restore all things, to renew all things, and to destroy the evil one and all his works. This plan begins with our own renewal and restoration and the destruction of the evil within us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Seek after His presence and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you so that you can continually live in the now readily accessible presence of the Father!
2. Ask the Lord to reveal any wounds that have been inflicted upon you. Pray for His healing touch.
3. Pray for the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in your life.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

LUKE 24:1-6

We saw in yesterday's reading that "darkness came over the whole land" when Jesus was crucified (Luke 23:44). In each of our personal beginnings, we lived in the dark—or may still live in the dark if we have not received Jesus—but God makes His light shine in our hearts (see 2 Corinthians 4:6). This is the way of our God; His light shines out of the darkest places.

God's ultimate act of overcoming the darkness was through the Resurrection of His Son, Jesus. There could never be a darker moment than when the Light of the world was slain. Yet, Jesus used the darkest moment in history to provide His followers with access to the very source of light—Himself. He promises that "Whoever follows [Him] will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). This applies to our lives on this earth and for the rest of eternity.

We don't need to fear death or anything else that the evil one tries to throw at us because Jesus has overcome. If God can speak light into existence and defeat the power of death, He can handle whatever darkness you may be facing in your life, and this is exactly what He promises to do for those who invite Him in. Jesus rose from the dead so that we might have this hope. So don't lose heart—Jesus has overcome!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Begin your prayer time by reflecting on and thanking God for the hope that you have in Jesus because of His Resurrection.
2. Spend time in listening prayer by asking God to reveal moments in your life when He turned dark situations around for good.
3. Go for a prayer walk around your neighborhood or school, and pray for the light of Jesus to shine out of the darkness (be specific).

Bonus: Spend time in private worship using the song "Resurrecting" by Elevation Worship.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 3

REAWAKENING TO THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Jesus did not leave us as orphans; rather, He sent His Holy Spirit to indwell and fill those who put their trust in Him. This week, we will explore various aspects of the Spirit's ministry to us. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be present and to open up your eyes and heart.

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INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

ROMANS 8:9

Do you have a favorite spot in your home? Maybe it's your bedroom or a quiet little spot away from everyone else. Maybe it's in the kitchen around the table with family and friends or in the backyard. Wherever it is, what makes it your favorite spot? I'm guessing that it's in that spot where you feel the most peace, the most security, the most at rest . . . like you belong there.

In Romans 8:9, Paul talks about being inhabited by the Spirit of Christ. When you belong to Christ, His Spirit takes up residence in you. You are His home, and you belong to Him—just like you live in your house, and your house belongs to you. If a person visits your home, they are a guest there, but they don't live there, and the house doesn't belong to them because they're not part of the family. In the same way, if a person does not belong to Christ, if they are not part of His family, then the Spirit does not live in them. If we don't have a relationship with God, then we aren't truly home; we are not at rest, we don't belong!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Go to that favorite place in your home now. Just be still and quiet there for a few minutes and allow that feeling of rest and belonging to wash over you. Ask the Lord to be present.
2. Pray and ask God to come and make His home in you. Ask Him to reveal to you whether or not you are truly welcoming Him.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to live in you in such a way that brings peace, rest, and a sense of belonging.

» by Stacy Hall

CONVICTED BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

JOHN 16:8-11

Have you ever seen the movie *The Emperor's New Groove*? There are a few scenes where Kronk has an angel and a demon appear on each of his shoulders. When Kronk is faced with moral decisions, they manifest to represent and express different ideas about what he should do. While our reality may not contain these visual representations, that does not mean there are not voices actively speaking into our lives and persuading our choices.

When we place our faith in Christ, we become heirs of God and receive a down payment on our inheritance in the form of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew we would need help to navigate the increasing darkness of the world, and thus He promised His Spirit.

When the Spirit dwells in us, He encourages us in the truth yet convicts us when we have strayed. When we receive the Spirit, we may think that He will be as easy to hear and understand as the angel on Kronk's shoulder. However, due to the brokenness in our world, the voice that convicts us can sometimes be intermixed and overpowered by the voice of our enemy. It is only when we take the time to practice listening and learn to distinguish the voice of the Holy Spirit that we will be able to accurately hear the truth of these convictions and respond in the way the Spirit is guiding us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of areas in your life where you are doing something that is apart from what God's will is for you.
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. While it may not be audible, when we ask in faith, we can expect a response.
3. Pray that the Lord will reveal to you ways in which you can turn your eyes back to Him.

» by Andrea Wageman

TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

JOHN 14:17; 16:13

Have you ever had a good teacher or coach before—someone who knows the right way to explain a difficult lesson or who understands you and wants to see you grow? A good teacher can take subjects that are difficult to understand and teach them in a way that is understandable. Good teachers care about their students, and if you have a good teacher, you can tell that teaching is not just their job, it's part of caring for your life.

Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit is the best teacher who teaches us all things and guides us to truth. He wants us to know Him more, and He teaches us as we listen to Him. Today, let's take the time to listen to the Holy Spirit and hear what He wants to teach us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Let the Spirit of Christ teach you as you read His Word. God inspired Scripture (see 2 Timothy 3:16), so why don't we let Him help us read it? Take a passage today and ask God's Spirit what He wants to teach you through this passage.
2. Try to practice listening to the Holy Spirit and see how He might teach you or guide you. Perhaps He wants to remind you that He loves you. Maybe He wants to challenge you to pray for that friend or enemy. Maybe He wants to teach you something about creation as you learn in class.
3. Ask the Lord to open up your eyes and heart to really experience Him and His goodness today.

» by Sam Sexton

HELPED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF CHRIST JOHN 14:16, 26; 16:17

Everyone loses someone or something meaningful to them at some point. There will come a time when you will experience some of life's most challenging events. Where will you draw your strength from? Jesus promises that He will not leave you as an orphan, but that He sent His Holy Spirit to be with those who put their trust in Him.

In the winter of 2019, I received a call that a close family member had passed away unexpectedly. I had just lost one of the greatest advisors in my life, and I felt very sad, confused, and angry. I didn't know what I could do to overcome my overwhelming grief, but I whispered, "Lord, please help me." I was reminded of the time when Jesus had to go away from His disciples.

They grieved when they learned Jesus would only be with them for a little longer. Their hearts were troubled, but Jesus assured them that He would send them the Holy Spirit so that they would not be alone (see John 14:26). The Holy Spirit would be their Counselor and Helper in every situation. Some of the disciples would even go on to accomplish greater things with the help of the Holy Spirit.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. In the midst of life's most challenging and troubling times, know that you are not alone. The Helper is with you! Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal Himself to you in a new way today.
2. As you navigate through school or work, lean on the Holy Spirit to release peace in all of the areas that seem out of your control. Ask the Lord to give you strength and knowledge on how to best lean on Him.
3. Surrender to Him all of the areas of your life where you need the Spirit to move. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit so that you will always be reminded of His presence in your life.

POINTED TO JESUS BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST JOHN 15:26

Jesus told us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. He also said that living in this world as a believer is going to be difficult—people will hate you, persecute you, and won't always desire the truth. But Jesus also promised that the Holy Spirit would come—the Comforter. You never have to do anything on your own, and you can't anyway.

When we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, He promises to send the Holy Spirit to give comfort, guidance, and power.

The Holy Spirit testifies of the truth of Jesus. Scripture does not say that He will testify about Himself or about you or your opinions or scientific evidence of creation. It simply states that He will testify about Jesus.

You have the Holy Spirit in your life to give you hope, strength, boldness, power, and assurance. You are not alone. The Holy Spirit is also at work in you as you model the love of Jesus and share the truth of Jesus. And the great news is that He has already gone ahead of you preparing the hearts and minds of those that you can share this truth with.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank God that He has sent Jesus to die for you so that you can be forgiven. Praise Him knowing that He has sent the Holy Spirit so that you can have hope, strength, boldness, power, and assurance in your life.
2. As you are at school, at practice, rehearsal, etc., pray that you will be attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and that you will follow His guidance.
3. Pray that you will be able to share the truth of the gospel to your friends by allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to guide you and give you words to say.

ENLIVENED BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

ROMANS 8:11

The apostle Paul begins this section of Scripture by speaking of a great truth. In chapter 7, he spoke of the struggle between our flesh, that is our sinful nature, and our desire to obey and follow God. We often want to honor Christ, and yet we fail to—we do the opposite. Paul reminds us that there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ (see Romans 8:1). Why is that?

Christ was condemned on our behalf so that we could be justified and made right with God! This is something that we can take much comfort in. Paul brings up this contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Those of us who are in Christ have the Spirit dwelling inside of us. We are now the temple of God. Paul is trying to emphasize something here—we are different now.

We have died with Christ and have been risen with Christ. Our old self is dead. Now, the Spirit lives within us. In fact, the Spirit raised Christ from the dead, and the same Spirit now lives in you—think about that for a minute or two. Paul wants us to see that the Spirit enables us to destroy sin. It is not our own works but the work of the Spirit in us who gives life to us!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Before you leave for school, ask the Lord to remind you of your identity in Christ.
2. During lunch, ask God to help you kill sin in your life—whether it be pride, envy, status, etc.—by the power of the Spirit and to empower you to submit to Him.
3. Before you put your head on your pillow, reflect on how the day went, repent of any sin, and thank God for Christ who stood condemned in your place.

» by Dwayne Sommersell

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

EPHESIANS 5:18

If you are anything like me, you like food. I love to eat everything from saucy Italian pastas to rich West African stews to spicy, “melt your face off” Thai soups—I’ll take it all! Good food gives me a warm and satisfying feeling that is good and pleasing to my soul, and it gives me energy to accomplish the good things that God has prepared in advance for me to do.

Throughout our day, we might take in a lot of things that have the potential of being good but might not always be good for our souls—things that give us a temporary high to mask feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety or just to break up the mundane rhythms of normal teenage life.

Take a moment now and read Ephesians 5:18. The apostle Paul tells us that we shouldn’t get drunk with alcohol because it makes us compromise our will, lose control of our bodies, and clouds our minds (that’s what debauchery is). Instead, Paul encourages us to be filled with the Spirit of Christ.

The Holy Spirit can reintegrate the aspects of our soul (will, body, and mind) that are torn apart by sin. All we need to do is ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and then choose to walk with Him in daily surrender. Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to fill you? If not, ask Him today. If you have asked the Holy Spirit to fill you before, ask Him again. Lean into Him.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind anything in your life that has kept you from experiencing His fullness. Confess those things to Him.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will come and fill you with His presence, His power, and His peace.
3. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to truly surrender all aspects of your life to Him.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 4

REAWAKENING TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church was purchased by Christ, initiated by Christ, and is under the ownership and leadership of Christ. He is in the position to tell us the purpose and function of the Church, and we are to submit to His ownership and headship. Think about Jesus' intent for the Church and how we are to live into that intent. Pray for an open heart.

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THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST AS ITS HEAD EPHESIANS 1:22-23

What is God doing?

Have you ever asked yourself that question? Sometimes I ask that because the things happening around me just don't make sense, but have you ever looked around your school, down your street, or at your job and asked, "God, what are you doing here right now?"

In Ephesians, Paul makes some powerful statements about what we have in Christ, specifically as His Church. In the Bible, the Church is described as a body with Christ as the head. While this might not seem like a big deal at first, the concept of the Church and Christ as her head brings some profound promises to us.

If we have Christ as our head, we don't rely on our strength but are held together under His perfect authority. As His Body, we are not alone. We are united together with brothers and sisters by His Spirit. He fills us with the fullness of His power—that same power that raised Christ from the dead! Our job is to be present to what Christ is already doing and join Him in that.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pause for a moment to think about some ways that you have seen God already at work in you and around you. Ask God to show you how you might join Him in what He is already doing.
2. Think of a situation in your life right now that is hard to walk through or understand. Instead of asking God, "Why is this happening?" try asking God, "What are you doing? How are you helping me grow even as you help me through this?" Pray that He will reveal Himself to you.
3. Take some time to write down what you hear from the Lord, and rest in the promise that He is over all things.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BODY

EPHESIANS 1:22-23

We often think that the Bible is full of stories of heroes—David fighting Goliath, Moses parting the Red Sea, etc. We imagine ourselves as the main characters in these stories because we want to be heroes, too. But the truth is, when you read deeper into these stories, you see that these people were not really heroes but deeply flawed humans whom God used despite their weaknesses. The only true hero of the Bible who appears in the flesh is Jesus Christ.

Because of His victory, He was made head over all things for the benefit of the Church. Despite our human weakness, He invites us into His mission to restore all the beloved children into relationship with God the Father. We cannot accomplish this apart from Christ.

Just as we cannot accomplish the mission without Christ's leadership, we also cannot accomplish this mission without the community of the Body of Christ. Being a part of a community is messy and hard work, but 1 Corinthians 12:18–21 reveals that just as the human body needs every part to function, Christ's Body is made of many different parts, all necessary and all needed to accomplish the mission.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to show you any ways you have tried to be the hero and do things in your own strength apart from Him. How can you trust Christ and His leadership in those areas?
2. Ask God to reveal anything that is blocking you from engaging with the Body of Christ. Is there unforgiveness? A lack of trust? Do you feel insecure about what you have to offer the Body of Christ? How is God asking you to step out in faith?
3. What part do you think God is calling you to play in the Body of Christ? Ask God to show you how you can walk faithfully in that calling.

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S FAMILY

EPHESIANS 2:19

One hard thing I face from time to time is feeling like I don't belong. Sometimes I make up an idea in my mind that I am being left out. Maybe this is because some past hurts have caused me to think that way. Maybe it's the enemy causing me to feel lonely in an attempt to steal, kill, and destroy my joy. These thoughts can leave me feeling pretty bummed.

So I have to look at what God says about my belonging. I trust Him. I trust what He says. He has proven Himself faithful to deliver hope and peace to me when I seek Him and His Word.

There are many promises found in Ephesians 2:19. First, you are no longer strangers—you get to experience the gift of an intimate relationship in belonging to God. This promise reminds us that we are known and loved by God. Second, you are a fellow citizen with the saints—you get to experience the gift of heavenly citizenship. We belong to a group of people who God offers grace, mercy, and the right to approach Him with confidence. This promise reminds us that we represent God as His citizen on earth. Third, you are a member of God's household—You can experience all the gifts that come with belonging to the family of God.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. When you begin to feel lonely or like you don't belong, ask the Lord to remind you that you belong to Him and His family.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will remind you how much He loves you and wants you to live close to Him.
3. Tell the Lord how grateful you are to belong to Him. When others around you are feeling lonely or like they don't belong, ask the Father to give you words of comfort and compassion to point them to Him.

» by Seth Roush

THE CHURCH AS THE DWELLING OF GOD'S SPIRIT EPHESIANS 2:21-22

What do you think of when you think of “the Church?” Do you think of a building? A group of people? An institution or an organization? I think in order to grasp the meaning of these verses, we need to look at the historical context of God’s presence dwelling on earth. In the Old Testament, we see that God’s presence once dwelt in the tabernacle and then in the temple—actual buildings. You may be thinking, “Isn’t God’s home in heaven?” Well, the earthly temple was the place that overlapped with God’s heavenly home. However, in 586 BC, the temple was destroyed, and God’s presence no longer resided in a building on earth.

Fast forward to Jesus’ life here on earth. God’s presence then dwelt in our world in a new way. Jesus made many bold claims; one in which He said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up” (John 2:19). The Jews were shocked to hear this, but Jesus was referring to the temple as His body.

After His Resurrection, Jesus promised God’s presence would come and dwell among His followers. Sure enough, communities throughout the ancient world sprung up and became a place where God ruled. Jesus’ death and Resurrection made a way for the Holy Spirit to dwell within God’s people. That’s us—the Church. By following Jesus, you become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to refresh you with His Spirit. Take a couple minutes to sit quietly and rest in His presence.
2. Praise God for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and for being your Helper and Advocate.
3. Ask God to give you bold faith so that more people will come to know Him and join in the “building” of His followers.

THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

EPHESIANS 5:32

It has been said that “conversation is the lifeblood of all relationships.” What does that mean? I think it means that talking matters.

In Ephesians, Paul says the Church is “married” to Jesus in the same way a husband and wife are married. Marriage is difficult to do well. The husband and wife must be cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually present. Marriage calls them to love God first, with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then to love their neighbor—their spouse—as themselves.

What does that have to do with prayer? Adults in healthy marriages talk regularly. Communication is the lifeline of cooperation and growth in commitment to one another. If they abandon meaningful, strategic, engaging conversation—even over the most boring tasks—they are destined to drift apart. A good friend of mine says, “Drifting takes no effort. It takes real grit to stay the course.” This is true in any relationship. We must stay engaged in communicating regularly!

How do we stay engaged in conversation with Jesus? Speak with Him about everything. Unity in marriage means talking continually all day. My wife and I text all day about what’s troubling us and what reminds us of each other. We do not have to go looking for something to talk about. Life gives us all we need!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Unity with Jesus is the same but better. Ask Jesus to reveal to you ways in which you can become more unified with Him.
2. Unlike a husband or wife, Jesus is always present and available to listen to us in our weakness, brokenness, and daily experience. Spend some intentional time talking with Him today. Bring everything to Him and ask Him to truly take control of your life.
3. Jesus is our greatest confidant. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord to bring peace to your heart when you spend time with Him.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-20

The Church was purchased by Christ, initiated by Christ, and is under the ownership and leadership of Christ. Think about Jesus' intent for the Church and how we are to live into that intent. An ambassador is a respected official acting as a representative of a nation. Sent to a foreign land, the ambassador's role is to represent and reflect the person who sent him/her. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul talked about how his calling, or mission, was of an ambassador, and he urged all Christians to consider themselves ambassadors for Christ. The gospel of reconciliation was always at the heart of Paul's preaching: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17).

Our reconciliation with God is possible only because Christ went to the cross and received the punishment for our sin. When our Savior cried out, "It is finished," the barrier between sinful man and Holy God was removed, making all those who trust in Him "holy in His sight, without blemish, and free from accusation" (Col. 1:22). Our reconciliation is based on the salvation Jesus provides, and it is accepted by faith (see John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus' intent for the Church is for us to be God's ambassadors. We've been "approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" (1 Thess. 2:4). As we go through this world, we represent God's Kingdom, and it is our responsibility to represent and reflect Christ to the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we must take the message of our God to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), urging men and women everywhere to be reconciled to God.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to give you opportunities to share the gospel with those around you. Pray that He will open your eyes to those opportunities.
2. Pray that God will ready the hearts of those around you who He has placed in your life to talk about the gospel.
3. Ask for His Spirit to fill you as you reflect and represent Christ to the world.

THE CHURCH AS THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE TRUTH 1 TIMOTHY 3:15

Paul is writing this letter to Timothy because he is uncertain of his future. He wants Timothy to know his perspective of the healthy function of a Church. He refers to the Church as “God’s household”—the Church is a family. We are all sons and daughters of God. Paul wants all of God’s children to know how to approach His household, the Church.

Paul calls the Church “the church of the living God.” The “living God” was a name often associated with God the Father in the Old Testament. This is a reminder that we serve and worship a living God.

Paul also calls the Church “a pillar and foundation of the truth.” The Greek word that he uses here is “stylos,” which means a “pillar, column, prop, or support.” This Greek root word refers to something that steadies or stiffens or holds. The purpose of the Church is to support truth.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Have a time of prayer and reflect with God how you conduct yourself in His household.
2. Pause and take a moment of prayer with the living God you serve. Ask Him if there is an area where you can serve Him within the Body of Christ, the Church.
3. Reflect with God on how you can help your local church to be a pillar of truth in the community.

» by Nicole Moses

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 5

REAWAKENING TO THE MISSION OF CHRIST

This week, we will look at some of the things Jesus has called us to do as we live on mission with Him in this world. He defines and assigns the mission we are to carry out. May we carry it out in obedience and dependence!

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BEING SALT AND LIGHT

MATTHEW 5:13-16

The Scriptures tell us that we are the salt of the earth, but what does that mean?

Salt is an enhancer that makes flavors better by suppressing bitter compounds. So many things cause bitterness—unfilled expectations, unforgiveness, unkindness, etc. As salt, we fight against this flavor, and as we do, we reveal sweetness. This is how salt is salty—it suppresses the bitter and magnifies the sweet. Can you think of any areas in your life that might need a little saltiness?

As we get older and life seems to get more complicated, there are many things that can make us feel weary. Yet, we have a place to find rest. As we rest in the Lord, our hope is found. Psalm 62:5 says: “Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.”

Does your hope come from God? What do you hope for? Who do you hope for? God not only calls us to find our hope in Him, He calls us to hope and be hope for others.

It is because we have this hope that we are a light in the world. In our relationships with other people, we shine the way for them to find their path toward God. With our words and our actions, we can help guide others so that they do not fall or become lost. A light helps people see.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to reveal to you ways that you can better become like salt, inviting Him into your life to truly magnify Himself over you.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to the ways you need to rely on Him more than you rely on yourself.
3. Pray that the Lord will guide you to better guide others in a life of His presence and His glory.

» by Angie Valli

BEING FISHERS OF PEOPLE

LUKE 5:1-11

Simon Peter, John, and James had been fishing all night with no luck. They gave up because they knew that if they had no luck at night, they certainly were not going to have any during the day. It is at this moment that Jesus tells them to go out and cast their nets again.

Simon Peter chooses to listen, and to their surprise, they caught so many fish that both boats began to sink. Simon Peter, realizing Jesus' immense power, begs Him to depart from them because he knows that he is a sinner. Jesus responds by calling Simon Peter, James, and John to be fishers of men.

Amazingly, the three future disciples didn't ask any questions; they left everything and followed Jesus. They witnessed firsthand Jesus' power so they had confidence that they could become fishers of people.

As followers of Christ, we also have this call to be fishers of people. Even though we have this calling, many of us are hesitant to live it out. A common reason many Christians are reluctant to share their faith is because they have yet to experience Jesus' power or they have forgotten about how amazing Jesus' power really is. The same God who commands creation and makes fish appear out of nowhere can and will help as you partake on this journey of leading people to Christ.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God for a fresh experience of His power that enables you to be bold in your faith.
2. As you walk into school, ask God to reveal to you people who you need to be reaching out to, people who you need to be fishing for.
3. Write down the name of at least one person who you will be praying for and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in praying for anyone He brings to mind.

CARING FOR HURTING PEOPLE

MATTHEW 25:31-46

When God asks us to care for the hurting, the hungry, the people who are downtrodden or forgotten by society, He asks us to extend His compassion. He desires that we bravely open our eyes to see the beauty of humanity.

When we choose to look deeper than outward circumstances and lay aside our uncomfortable anxieties or misguided assumptions, we find ourselves face-to-face with our Creator God. He pulls us toward Himself, and we experience the vastness of His love and mercy. The grandeur of His design and purpose for the whole of humanity becomes more and more evident. We are all designed to be near to Him, know Him, belong with Him.

There are people we know and see each day who crave the love and affection of their Creator. If we ask and listen, the Holy Spirit will gently whisper to us, encouraging our hearts to fall further in love with God by seeing and serving those who are hungry and thirsty.

Each day, we must open our eyes and intently search for Jesus. If we do, we will find the people right in front of us who yearn for the love and affection of God. The healing Kingdom is for the hungry and thirsty. They will taste and see Christ and be satisfied.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank and praise God for seeing you and accepting you as His own. Ask God to give you eyes to see and know the people around you.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you hungry and thirsty people today. Listen and respond. Don't ignore the nudge to talk to someone new even if it feels a little uncomfortable.
3. As you go out into the world today, search for Christ. Ask Him to transform you into someone hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

» by Kelsey Manfrew

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD **MATTHEW 24:14**

This week's devotional jumps into the Gospel of Matthew. We're going to be looking at some of the things Jesus called us to do as we live on mission with Him. Today, we will look at a verse that tells us one of the many signs and actions leading up to the end times. Read Matthew 24:14.

What is the point of this verse? How do we even start praying for this? Jesus is communicating two things: (1) The end will come no matter what; and (2) He wants us to be prepared and on His team.

Preparation is a common theme for Jesus. Unlike the first time, there will be no mistaking the Second Coming of Jesus. He calls us to be a part of His ministry by calling others to prepare as well.



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Pray for the world. There are people in the world—in other countries or maybe even in your own town or school—who have never heard of Jesus. Pray that the gospel will move to those unreached places and people.
- 2.** Pray that the Lord will give you names of people in your own life who need to hear the good news. God has placed all of us exactly where we are for many reasons, and one is to be a light and reflect Jesus.
- 3.** Pray for boldness. Jesus says right before verse 14 that we will be hated because of our relationship with Him. This is a scary promise, but He doesn't expect us to do it on our own. We can do anything through the strength that only Christ can give us. Pray that the Lord will give you a bold heart as you join in His ministry.

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

ACTS 1:8

As Jesus' time with His disciples drew to an end, they asked the question that was at the forefront of their minds: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Basically, they were asking, "When does everything get better?" Jesus answered that God holds times and dates for Himself, which is clearly not what the disciples wanted to hear. But Jesus turned around and gave them what they actually needed: a mission and a means.

Their mission was to be witnesses and embrace the identity of those who experienced the resurrected Jesus—this mission was their chief purpose. The scope of this mission was gradual but not limited. He told them to start within their immediate context and not to stop until the ends of the earth.

This mission is daunting, but He also promised a means to accomplish it—power, specifically Holy Spirit power! So, what does this mean for us? Where do you fit in this mission?



PRAYER POINTS:

1. How has Jesus changed your life? Take time to list changes He's made in your life and give praise and thanks for His life-changing work.
2. Ask God to impress His mission on your heart. The next time you are in a crowded location, at a grocery store, or at a sports game, stop and look at individuals and ask God to help you see them as He does.
3. Instead of worrying about the current troubles of our times, spend time praying for God to show you how to live on purpose with Holy Spirit power. Discuss with a peer what that may look like in your life.

» by Erich Wiegner

PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER

1 PETER 3:15

When you enter a competition (for example, swimming, running, the math league, or choir ensemble), you go into training for the big day. You dedicate time every day to improve yourself so that you are ready for when the day comes. People see the effort you put in and want to know why you're preparing so much, and since it is a passion of yours, you readily and lovingly explain to them why.

The same concept can be applied to your faith in Jesus. As you live with a Kingdom-focus and have your hope in Jesus, people will see a difference in you and want to know why you have this hope—be prepared. Abide in Christ (see John 15:1–10) and live with Him as Lord and King over everything in your life.

Knowing Jesus takes time and effort—just like preparing for your competition—because it is a personal relationship. Taking time each day to talk with Him and listen are vital to growing and being rooted in His love (see Colossians 2:6–7, Ephesians 3:17–19), and knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26). Read the Word of God and allow His words to reign in your life (see Colossians 3:16) so that you know how to answer people gracefully and lovingly (see Colossians 4:5–6).



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** What is your hope in? As you prayerfully consider this, also talk with Jesus about why you believe in Him, and ask Him to reveal Scripture to you to steady your foundation in Him.
- 2.** Ask the Holy Spirit for boldness and the opportunities to share your faith and hope in Jesus with others.
- 3.** As you encounter people, ask the Holy Spirit who He wants you to talk to, and follow His promptings—maybe it is with your neighbor, a classmate, or someone at the grocery store or library.

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

MATTHEW 28:18-20

If you've ever seen or participated in a 400-meter relay, you may know that some of the most important moments during that event are the handoffs. The moment the baton is passed between teammates is so important because the split second it takes to recover from a bad handoff could mean the difference between winning or losing. It requires both the one passing and the one receiving the baton to be in sync with one another.

In the final moments before He was taken up into heaven, Jesus brought His disciples together for one final reminder of His authority, His mission, and His continued presence with them. He said, "You've seen what I've been doing; now it's your turn."

The disciples had been following Jesus for three years now watching, learning, and partnering with Him in His mission. Now it was their turn to run. But unlike in the 400-meter relay, the one who passes the baton keeps running with us—He encourages us, teaches us, guides us, comforts us, and gives us the strength to keep on running into all that He has for us and all that He calls us into.



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Ask the Lord to make you aware of the ways He's calling you to partner with Him in His mission and to prepare you for it.
- 2.** Ask Jesus specifically for opportunities to step into what He's calling you to.
- 3.** Thank Him for His presence with you as you step into His calling, and ask Him to help you keep in step with His Spirit as you partner with Him in His mission.

» by Nick Galluccio

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 6

REAWAKENING TO THE RETURN OF CHRIST

We look to the future with the certain hope of Christ's return. He's coming again! We will see Him and be with Him to experience His glory in a way we never have before. All of the things that are wrong with this world will be righted and Jesus will reign forever!

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CHRIST IS COMING AT AN UNKNOWN DATE AND TIME MATTHEW 26:36-44

Are you a “details” person or a “surprise me” person?

The “details” person likes to have everything in order to make informed decisions or feel good about a situation. The “surprise me” person does not want to make any decisions—they want to live in the moment. Admittedly, this is an oversimplification and perhaps you’re a mix of the two. In any case, I think both wonder about Jesus’ return. It must have been the “details” disciples who asked the question, “When will these things be, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3 ESV).

In answering, Jesus gave just enough information that would satisfy a “details” disciple and probably more information than a “surprise me” disciple would want to know. While Jesus gave them signs to look for, He specifically said that only the Father knew the day or the hour of His return. It is simply not our business to know.

But, not knowing doesn’t mean you should fret or throw caution to the wind. Please, do not follow every conspiracy or method to decipher the day or the hour of Jesus’ return; that will be a waste of time. Likewise, do not act like it doesn’t matter and engage in inconsequential living. Instead, focus on these two phrases while you wait: “Stay awake,” and “Be ready.”



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Tell Jesus, in all honesty, how you feel about His return—why it matters to you or doesn’t matter to you.
2. If you agree with this statement, speak this over your life: *By the grace of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, I am a faithful and wise servant of Jesus. I am set apart to do the will of the Father on this earth. Today, and until Jesus returns, I seek to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in truth and righteousness.*
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill you, to draw you closer to Him, and to bring you peace.

CHRIST IS COMING AS THE REALIZATION OF OUR HOPE **TITUS 2:13**

A life with Jesus means living a life of hope even when things look dim. Recently, world events have shown us that our hope is not found in this world but in Jesus Christ. As we wait for His return, we can abide with Him now and experience that hope in our daily lives.

As you pray today, take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you are putting your hope in. Are you hoping in Him or in relationships, education, money, or other idols?

As we wait for Christ's return, we have the privilege of living out what Jesus called "the greatest commandments"—to love God and love our neighbor. By doing both of these well, we can bring people into the Kingdom to experience this abundant life with Jesus. This week, as we talk about Christ's return, many people still haven't heard of His first arrival to earth to die, rise again to save us from our sin, and restore our relationship with God our Father.

No matter what the future holds, we don't have to fear because as Hebrews 6:19 says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." In these storms of life, we have our anchor, Jesus. Because of Him, we don't need to fear the future.



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to bring some names of people to mind who need the hope of Jesus and to feel His love through your actions as you love your neighbor.
- 2.** What fears are you holding onto today? Jesus can handle your fears, and He won't be offended by them. Take a few moments to name your fears and take them to Jesus to allow Him to replace them with His hope.
- 3.** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in trusting Him instead of yourself for all things. Pray that He will reveal Himself to you today.

CHRIST IS COMING TO BRING EVERYTHING UNDER HIS CONTROL PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

Have you ever sat back and wondered what life will be like when Jesus comes again? If not, I totally understand. As a high school student, I was too busy trying to find a healthy rhythm of schoolwork, sports, and juggling a social life. I was so focused on the “right now” that I didn’t ever think about “what’s coming,” or more specifically, “who’s coming.”

I want to validate where you might be in life. My story might be your story, or maybe your story has different activities; but nonetheless, you are also trying to find a healthy rhythm of your life—I get that. But allow me to encourage you to pause for a moment and shift your focus on one of the greatest truths that’s still to come—Christ’s Second Coming.

A few things to note: First, Jesus is coming back, and His coming is soon! How soon? Well, sooner than yesterday! Second, when He comes, He will place everything under His control. He has the power to redeem everything, to make everything right, even our earthly bodies. Now that’s some serious power! Christ’s rule will alleviate this world’s sin and brokenness all to establish a new world, which is His Kingdom.



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Pray about the realness of the Lord’s coming promise. Ask Him to reveal to you more of who He is.
- 2.** I believe that as you engage God about His promises, because of His love for you, He will make these things evident. Ask the Holy Spirit to come into your heart and transform your thinking.
- 3.** Pray that the Father will show you more about Himself and His ways. Thank Him that He is so willing to reveal even more of who He is to you.

CHRIST IS COMING AS THE JUST AND TRUE JUDGE **REVELATION 19:2A**

Have you ever had someone truly wrong you or someone you love? It is so hard to let go of what you think they deserve for what they have done. It can eat away at you, your happiness, and your joy, and it can overcome your every thought. It has the potential to make you miserable.

In Revelation, we read the praises of John. He writes that all power and glory belong to God—not anyone else. He will be the one who brings justice to every circumstance because He alone is the one true judge—not you, and not me. You can trust that God knows, sees, and hears everything. He is not fooled by things that fool us; He is not resentful, and He is not vengeful.

We can praise right alongside John because we know that God is coming back! We can let go, we can release what has been hurting us, and we can trust that God knows what is best for every single situation. We do not need to worry about the people who have wronged us; it is not our job. Our job is to love one another like Jesus loves us!



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Do you truly trust that God is coming back and that His judgements are true and righteous? Ask Him to help you in any areas of unbelief.
- 2.** Ask God to reveal to you what you have been holding onto—intentionally or not—and what needs to be released back to Him.
- 3.** Take time and listen to what God is saying back to you. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be present.

» by Christy Hilderbrand

CHRIST IS COMING AS THE MAJESTIC KING AND LORD **REVELATION 19:11-16**

How much time have you spent praising Jesus today? I don't just mean singing your favorite worship song, reading a passage of Scripture, or peppering Him with requests; I mean, as Francis Chan has put it, "How much time have you spent staring at Jesus and telling Him how amazing He is?"

Have you ever felt terrified at the thought of standing in His holy, radiating presence? Do you see how evil you are in the light of His goodness? Have you fallen on your face before Him out of recognition of your unworthiness and His righteousness? Have you felt the comfort of His touch as He gently places His hand on your shoulder and says, "Get up child, your debt has been paid?" When we truly understand who Jesus is, our souls respond with songs of praise, we are drawn to His majesty, and the concerns of this world fade away in His glory.

Read Revelation 19:11–16.

Do you understand what I mean now? Here John describes Jesus as the majestic King and Lord who has come to subject everyone and everything to Himself. This may sound tyrannical, and for non-believers, it will be terrifying; but for those who know Jesus as the compassionate and just King that He is, this is the inevitable outcome. No other king can stand against Him—no evil dictator, oppressive tyrant, self-serving ruler, beast, false prophet, dragon, and no evil—not even the devil. For Jesus' name is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.



PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Spend some time praising Jesus. Read the passage again and marvel at Him.
- 2.** What have you not surrendered to Jesus? What is keeping you from doing that? Ask the Father to reveal these things to you.
- 3.** Who do you know who doesn't recognize Jesus? Ask Jesus what you should do to help them surrender to Him.