

PRAYING WITH JESUS:

40 DAYS TOWARD CHURCH REVITALIZATION



Re-Establishing Jesus' Priorities (Days 27-33)

TRUE WAY BAPTIST CHURCH

2020

Adapted from



DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

I like what Bobby Jamieson says in his short article entitled, “The Bible’s Burden for Church Revitalization.” Using the church at Corinth as his example, he describes them as a church with “a potent mix of false teaching, immorality, division, infighting, and all-around worldliness... so when faced with these issues in Corinth, what did Paul do? He didn’t say, ‘Those people are hopeless. They’re a mixture of false believers and proud, stubborn religious people. You don’t want those people in your church anyway,’ – and then commission Timothy to go and plant a new church in Corinth. Instead, he pleaded with them. He came to see them again and again. He rebuked them and instructed them and bore with them. In short, he worked to reform the church of God which was at Corinth.”

That dear friend, is what God is doing at your church. He is renewing, reforming where necessary, restoring, and revitalizing your church to match up with His plan, purpose, and priorities!

PRIORITIES OF FAITHFULNESS

Read Matthew 3:4-12

John the Baptizer rebuked religious leaders who were coming to him for baptism but who were not bearing “*fruit in keeping with repentance*” (3:8). In other words, perhaps Jesus’ chief expectation, in this passage is TRUE FAITH.

Before we can demonstrate faithfulness, we must have faith in Christ alone. This is true for individuals as well as churches. If all God wants is church members, then just as God can raise up sons of Abraham from stones, so too can He raise up church members from stones. What He really wants though, is people of faith!

PRAY...

Heavenly Father, lay bare every heart in our church family and reveal any false professions of faith. Guide each of our church members to examine their heart, and by Your grace confirm our faith in Christ alone, and for those who have never truly believed, bring them in total surrender to Jesus. Deliver us from religiosity and false professions and set us all free through faith in Your Son alone. In His Name, Amen..

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

“AND IN THE EARLY MORNING, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK, JESUS GOT UP, LEFT THE HOUSE, AND WENT AWAY TO A SECLUDED PLACE, AND WAS PRAYING THERE.” (MARK 1:35)

“You’d think if Jesus was the Son of God, He wouldn’t need to pray. Or at least he wouldn’t need a specific prayer time because He’d be in such a constant state of prayer. You’d expect Him to have a direct line to His Heavenly Father, like broadband to heaven. At the least, you’d think Jesus could do a better job of tuning out the noise of the world. But surprisingly, Jesus seemed to need time with God just as much as we do.”

--Paul E. Miller in *A Praying Life*, (p. 31)

THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER

Jesus needed regular, daily, direct communication with His Heavenly Father. So do we! He demonstrated and taught this Kingdom priority throughout His ministry. Your church needs prayer like never before! Part of the reason you are in the revitalization process is because somewhere along the journey individual and congregational prayer became a low priority and/or overlooked practice. I’m suggesting that prayer became your “emergency evacuation procedure” instead of your “daily strength and sustenance.” What steps can you begin taking today in order to re-establish the priority of prayer in your own life, in your church’s weekly schedule of activities, and in your church’s gatherings?

Here’s what my best friend says, “Pray like everything depends on God (because it does), and then get to work as though everything depends on you.” The last part most of us have mastered; you aren’t afraid of hard work. The problem is the praying; it is infrequent, powerless, and unfocused. Ask God to help you make a plan for how you are going to continue to pray faithfully after these 40 days are finished.

PRAY...

Dear God, I have neglected the moment-by-moment practice of prayer far too long in my own life. Please forgive me, and by Your grace move me towards You every day by causing My heart to long for fellowship and communication with You all through the day. And sadly, Lord, our church family has lost our devotion to prayer and our prayers too often focus on the sick and dying, and not often enough on your Kingdom agenda in our community. Please forgive us and stir our hearts to seek You as though we are completely helpless apart from You (which we are – John 15:5). I ask this humbly in Jesus Name. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-NINE

What is the one significant word that is used in each of the following verses: (Look up and read each one)

John 6:29 Mark 5:36 Matthew 27:42 Luke 1:20

The common word is _____

BELIEVE IN HIM

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent” (John 6:29). This, of course, is a call to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and having believed, to receive eternal life. It is a call, first to saving faith. However, it is secondarily a reminder that every moment and every situation of every believer’s life calls for the same faith – not to be saved all over again – but to “have complete confidence in; trust and faith in; reliance upon Jesus” for every moment and every situation!

Jesus founded your church; He planted it in your community. He saved each of you who have believed in Him; HE WILL NOT FAIL YOU TODAY! Believe in Him! This is a critical Kingdom priority for all those who long to see Christ exalted and His Kingdom advanced. Believe.

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, I am beginning to understand that the greatest work I can ever do is simply to believe in You! In fact, I recognize that there are no works for me to do to gain salvation. Neither are there any works I can do as Your child to please you more than to believe in You! Help me today to trust You. Focus my thoughts on Your mighty power, not my own limited abilities. Keep my eyes fixed on You, Lord, when I am tempted to look at the overwhelming odds against me. Move my feet forward in faith when I am frozen in place by unanswered questions and unknown destinations. I have believed in You Jesus! Thank you for saving me. Now give me grace to keep believing in You in every moment of my life and in every situation, especially this revitalization work You are doing now in our church. In Your strong Name I pray, Amen.

DAY THIRTY

Perhaps it is most accurate to say that of all Jesus' Kingdom priorities, the final standing order He gave to His followers is the one that should supersede all other priorities. Unity among believers validates our witness. Prayer empowers our hearts and minds to engage the disciple-making task among the nations, prayer accomplishes the miraculous. Believing faith keeps us moving forward despite difficulty, disappointment, and hardship. These all, as well as all other Kingdom priorities, undergird the primary task of the church – discipling the nations!

“ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. AS YOU ARE GOING, DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I COMMANDED YOU, AND I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.”
(MATTHEW 28:18-20)

THE IMPERATIVE

The one word in Matthew's "Great Commission" verses that is the *IMPERATIVE*, (the command), is "***Disciple... all the nations.***" This is our assignment! Jesus used three *PARTICIPLES* to describe the disciple-making process – "going" (as you are going), "baptizing" (those who profess faith in Christ), and "teaching" (obedience to Jesus).

PRAY...

Jesus, You have made our assignment quite clear. Forgive me, and forgive our church, for so often being all wrapped up in lesser priorities that yield almost no fruit and do not contribute to the accomplishment of the Great Commission. We are choosing to turn away from such foolishness and to embrace once again the *DISCIPLE-MAKING MANDATE* You gave us just before Your ascension to heaven. Please empower us with Your Holy Spirit to be Your witnesses in our Jerusalem, and Judea, Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth. We long to see Your Kingdom come as You reign over the hearts and lives of those who have placed their faith in You alone, have followed You in believer's baptism and are seeking to obey everything You have commanded. Make us into a disciple-making church, in Your Majestic Name I pray. Amen

DAY THIRTY-ONE

Read Mark 11:11-18

Bible scholar, pastor, and author Warren Wiersbe says of this text: “This ‘religious market’ was set up in the court of the Gentiles, the one place where the Jews should have been busy doing serious missionary work. If a Gentile visited the temple and saw what the Jews were doing *in the name of the true God*, he would never want to believe what they taught. The Jews might not have permitted idols of wood and stone in their temple, but there were idols there just the same. The court of the Gentiles should have been a place for praying, but it was instead a place for preying and paying.” (The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151).

PRAYING, PREYING, OR PAYING?

What about your church? What would Jesus think of your gatherings if He visited your fellowship next week? Would He find you to be a praying people... or a preying people... or just a paying people. When a spirit of prayer marks a church family it welcomes people from the nations of the world, from the poorest to the wealthiest; from the youngest to the oldest; red, black, yellow, brown, white – all races and nationalities. When prayer is absent, there is too much sin and self on display and the welcome banners are missing. Do the people of your community feel welcome when they visit your church family? If you don't know, ask them. Better yet, breed prayer back into every aspect of your gatherings, from small groups to large groups, and you will find the nations being drawn to know our God.

PRAY...

Jesus, would You please bring a new spirit and aroma of prayer to the gatherings of our fellowship. We do not want to push You away from our gatherings in favor of those things that satisfy our sinful natures. We want You to the center of attention every time our church family is together in any way. Please develop us into a “house of prayer for all the nations.” Send forth Your Welcoming Spirit to all the people in our community and all those across our region, so that they feel welcome in our fellowship as we pray, worship, and praise Your Almighty and Wonderful Name. We don't want a single person, visiting among us, to be turned away from You because of our attitudes or behavior. In Jesus Name, Amen.

DAY THIRTY-TWO



Church leaders of declining churches everywhere are looking for that magic bullet, a new program that can be employed, a pre-packaged activity that they can plug and play...

But a church desiring church revitalization must begin developing disciples one-on-one and challenging those who are discipled to commit to discipline others. (Tom Cheyney in Thirty-Eight Church Revitalization Models for the Twenty-First Century Church, p. 26)

WITNESSES

Read Acts 1:1-11

The word “witnesses” in Acts 1:8 is from the Greek word *martus*, the root from which we get our English word martyr. We usually associate a martyr with someone who has had their life taken by enemies of the Gospel because of their faithful witness to Jesus. The centuries are littered with the deaths of believers who have been drowned, burned at the stake, beheaded, crucified, shot, stabbed, run over, starved, fed to various animals, or any other number of cruel death sentences.

Paul describes well the kind of witnesses Jesus intended His First Century and Twenty-First Century disciples to be: *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21). Whether we live or die is up to the Lord. What is up to us is, “Will I be a faithful witness today for Jesus?” It is an irreplaceable Kingdom priority for you and for each member of your church.

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, make me a faithful witness of Your grace in every and any situation. Open my mouth to declare boldly the truth of the Gospel, and give me the words that need to be spoken in every conversation. Ignite our church family with Your Holy Spirit to be Your witnesses everywhere we go and in every relationship we have. In Jesus Name, Amen.

DAY THIRTY-THREE

Peter needed God's revitalizing power in his life. Once he had declared boastfully, *"Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away"* (Matthew 26:33). Yet when things got crazy, Peter denied he even knew Jesus: *"Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed"* (Matthew 26:74).

When the resurrected Jesus took a walk on the beach with Peter, He was asking Peter the same question He is asking each of you today, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15). Do you love Jesus more than you love anything or anyone else in your life? This is critical for the revitalization and well-being of your church.

"SIMON, SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE?" (JOHN 21:15)

LOVING JESUS

Loving Jesus is described in several different ways in the Bible. Here are a few examples...

- *"O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water"* (Psalm 63:1).
- *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15).
- *"Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love"* (Ephesians 6:24).
- *"and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8).
- *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen"* (1 John 4:20).

PRAY...

O God, our Father, give me and every member of our church family an all-consuming love for Your Son Jesus! You have faithfully demonstrated Your great love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Fill our hearts with deep devoted love for His saving grace, His presence with us through His Spirit, and His faithful intercession in heaven right now on our behalf. Make us radiant lovers of Your Son, I ask in Jesus' Name, Amen.