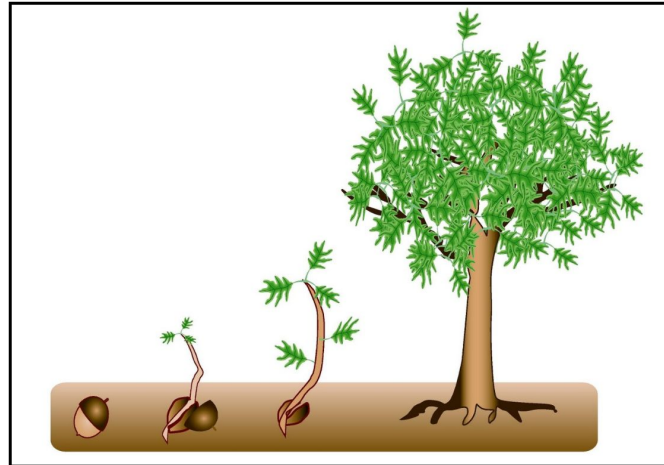


PRAYING WITH JESUS:

40 DAYS TOWARD CHURCH
REVITALIZATION.



**Patiently Awaiting Transformation
(Days 34-40)**

TRUE WAY BAPTIST CHURCH

2020.

Adapted from



DAY THIRTY-FOUR

In his book Biblical Church Revitalization, Pastor Brian Croft tells the story of his own experience leading a church through the revitalization process. In his conclusion, he says: “Church revitalization is a good and noble work. It is fraught with challenges, dangers, trials, and difficulties, and only men who are called and gifted for the task will be able to remain steadfast in them. However, for those who lean into this calling and put their hands to the plow, there are unique joys and rewards that come with this important gospel work.”

*“BUT JESUS SAID TO HIM, ‘NO ONE, AFTER PUTTING HIS HAND TO THE PLOW AND LOOKING BACK, IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD’”
(LUKE 9:62)*

PLOWING WITH JESUS

One thing I learned while farming for Mr. Barteo back in the 1980’s was that plowing and planting demands straight rows. In order to do this, he taught me to pick a spot at the other end of the field, point the tractor in that direction, and with your eye fixed on it don’t get distracted. The same is true for the pastor, or church member, setting out on the journey of church revitalization – fix your eyes on Jesus and don’t look back! It may be a long way to the other end of the field. Such a journey demands persevering faith, determination, and patience. Don’t lose heart. Keep your eyes on Jesus!

PRAY...

Jesus, I am so grateful that You endured the cross, despising the shame, and now You have sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, Your work of redemption finished! Thank you for finishing!! Please infuse me and our church family with grace, faith, hope, love, and joy in our own journey. Guide us through every obstacle, setback, difficulty, and challenge; make us overcomers; finishers! Perfect Your finishing ways in each of us so we will see the victory You have in store for us as a result of this revitalization journey. In Your Name. Amen.

DAY THIRTY-FIVE

Read Luke 9:1-6

Luke describes Jesus sending out His twelve apostles to preach the Kingdom of God and perform healings in this passage. His instructions to the apostles carry a warning that not everyone will receive them or their message. What are the apostles instructed to do when they encounter this kind of response?

They should

SHAKE OFF THE DUST

Shaking the dust off one's feet was a Jewish tradition symbolizing the proper disposal of heathen dust collected on someone's feet or clothing from traveling through Gentile regions. The symbolic act described by Jesus indicated that the apostles should regard those who would not receive the Gospel as unclean and as entirely responsible for their uncleanness.

Acts 18:6 describes a time when Paul did this in Corinth: *"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean, From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"*

Paul didn't quit, give up and take his marbles and go home. He simply left the synagogue in Corinth, but he stayed in the city an additional *"year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them"* (Acts 18:11). He patiently persevered in the work God had assigned to him. And so must you.

PRAY...

Gracious Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, Perfector, Sustainer, Friend, please grant to me and to our church family such a deep, abiding confidence in what You are doing among us that we will not lose heart. I believe that in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. Undergird us with Your divine strength; use Your Word each day to keep us strong against the tide of our flesh pushing us toward the beach of indifference. Cause us to persevere in faith, believing that You desire to see our church renewed and restored for the glory of Christ! In His Name. Amen.

DAY THIRTY-SIX

*“THOSE WHOM I LOVE, I REPROVE AND DISCIPLINE; THEREFORE, BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT. BEHOLD I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK; IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM AND WILL DINE WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME. HE WHO OVERCOMES, I WILL GRANT TO HIM TO SIT DOWN WITH ME ON MY THRONE, AS I ALSO OVERCAME AND SAT DOWN WITH MY FATHER ON HIS THRONE.”
(REVELATION 3:19-21)*

OVERCOMING

Jesus describes Himself in the passage above as an overcomer. He challenges the members of the church in Laodicea to be overcomers themselves. How will they do that? Obviously by the power of the Holy Spirit and the conviction in their own hearts to return fully to Christ in acts of zealous (glad, eager, quickly responsive) repentance.

Bill Henard, in partnership with the North American Mission Board, has written a tremendously helpful book for churches and pastors who are committed to the revitalization journey. In his book [Can These Bones Live?](#) Bill writes: “...do not ever give up on the church or on a church... Even Jesus, though He strongly chided the church in Laodicea, offered [a] very important invitation... if any church has ever existed that was in need of revitalization, the church in Laodicea was it, and yet Jesus did not give up on them.” Nor should you, my friend, give up on your church. In His sovereignty, God will bring restoration to those whose hearts are fully His (see 2 Chronicles 16:9).

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, Your grace is amazing! I praise You for Your goodness, Your steadfast love, and Your lovingkindness which endures from generation to generation! Thank You for not giving up on the church at Laodicea, and thank You for not giving up on our church either. We cannot accomplish revitalization without You, so we rejoice that You are with us in this journey, and that You will guide us through every decision and situation. Please make Your presence known to us in every step of our revitalization, and provide wisdom and counsel from Your Word and Your Spirit. I humbly ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

Read John 16:1-15

Who is Jesus encouraging the disciples to trust once He is gone from their physical presence? _____

Will His disciples face challenges in their Gospel work? _____

- The Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Friend because He:
- Convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8).
- Guides God's people in the truth (16:13).
- Discloses wisdom for decision-making regarding the future (16:13).
- Glorifies Jesus (16:14).

LEANING ON JESUS

Pastor Jeremie Rinne, previously serving in Massachusetts and now pastoring the Evangelical Church in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, describes leaning on Jesus, or trusting the ministry of the Holy Spirit, like this in his 9Marks article entitled "Be a Tortoise, Not a Hare:" "The [patient revitalizing church] strives for renewal through a steady rhythm of weekly expository preaching, letting the Word do its transformative work. [They] commit significant time to prayer, calling on God to revitalize. [They] go slowly enough to know and listen to church members, understanding that you cannot truly reform what you do not love. [They] have an overarching confidence in God's sovereignty to bring about needed change, so that setbacks roll off like rain off a shell... then when people ask how we turned our church around, we won't be flexing our muscles. Instead we will be able to say with all sincerity, 'The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.'"

PRAY...

Jesus, I am realizing more and more that You are the main player in the revitalizing effort our church so desperately needs. We are merely Your servants, and we like it that way. Keep empowering us to faithfully love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength while we pursue knowing You and obeying You. Please provide Your clear direction in our journey of revitalization. We are in this for the long haul, Jesus; willing to wait for You to put all the pieces together for Your glory. Make Your Name great we pleadingly request, in Your Great Name! Amen!

DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

Way back on Day Three we examined the disciples' fear induced by a surging storm all around them – a picture of drastically changing circumstances. Today we are thinking about fear caused by a different scenario – fierce opposition to righteousness. It is a common occurrence for those walking with the Lord, to endure push-back or resistance from others. Sometimes this resistance is harsh and generates fearfulness.

If you are being maligned, or ridiculed for your embrace of the revitalization effort in your church, remember what

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, *“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

ENDURANCE

John Folmar, pastor of Dubai Evangelical Church, in the United Arab Emirates, suggests taking “the long view when it comes to church reform. It helps to have a ten to twenty year time horizon. With a long-term perspective, we can more patiently prioritize the areas of church life that need to change. We can more contentedly operate in an imperfect ministry environment even as we ask people to forbear with our personal weaknesses as well.”

--“What Makes a Church Reform Possible?” in 9Marks Journal, Nov-Dec 2011, [Revitalize: Why We Must Reclaim Dying Churches](#)

PRAY...

Father, the revitalization journey we are taking is not without its difficulties. I am confident that You know about them better than I do. However, I am often discouraged and tempted to give up because of the resistance I sometimes feel from others. Help me by Your Spirit to disregard the temptation to fear man and instead to trust You. Help me to walk in grace with those who do not yet favor the revitalization effort. Use our resolve to inspire others to surrender to Your plan for our church's future. I ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

DAY THIRTY-NINE

Read Revelation 5:1-14

The ultimate goal for every church revitalization effort is so that we might all contribute to the ultimate reality Jesus revealed to the Apostle John in The Revelation. In eternity future, there will be people from every _____, _____, _____, and _____ gathered for the specific purpose of worshipping Jesus forever! (see Revelation 5:9 and 7:9).

This has been God's objective since before the creation of the earth – that all peoples, nations, tongues, and tribes would love, honor, adore, and worship Him. The revitalization of your church is for this express purpose above all else.

WORSHIP AND MISSIONS

Perhaps the most famous quote in this generation regarding the relationship between worship and missions comes from John Piper's classic book, Let the Nations Be Glad, in which he said, "Missions exist because worship doesn't."

It should be our strong, compelling desire that all churches be faithful contributors to this ultimate agenda – people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation worshipping Jesus. Until that day arrives, we press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, doing missions for the sake of future worship.

PRAY...

Jesus, we long for our church to be a faithful partner and contributor to the work of seeing Your Kingdom come so that in eternity every tribe and tongue, people and nation will be represented! Please revitalize our church and make us an active, fruitful part of Your eternal agenda. Renew us; restore Your glory in us and among us; revitalize every aspect of our church to make us Christ-centered, Biblically-grounded, and Gospel-driven. I ask this for Your glory alone! Amen.

DAY FORTY

We began this 40-day journey talking about Mark's words of urgency at the beginning of His Gospel account, "*The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God... make ready the way of the Lord, . . . make His paths straight.*" (Mark 1:1,3). We turn to Jesus, make His paths straight, and obey His commands because time is short for us to get the message to those who have not yet believed the Gospel message. Your willingness to pursue God's revitalization for your church is not really for you; it's for those you are strategically placed to reach for Christ!

*"BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR NO ONE KNOWS, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, NOR THE SON, BUT THE FATHER ALONE... THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHICH DAY YOUR LORD IS COMING"
(MATTHEW 24:36, 42)*

STILL MUCH TO DO

"The need for revitalization has never been greater in North America! An estimated 340,000 Protestant churches in America have an average attendance of less than one hundred. Research data tells us that in the United States more than 80% of the churches have plateaued or are declining. Each and every week we are currently seeing somewhere between fifty and seventy-five local churches closing their doors and not opening them again."

--Tom Cheyney in [Thirty-Eight Church Revitalization Models for the Twenty-First Century](#).

While the active, church-going, Christian population, by most measures, seems to be declining, and the U.S. population is definitely increasing, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ still has much to do in Kingdom advance and Gospel proclamation. Is your church going to be a full-fledged participant in this exciting assignment? As a friend often says, "We put our 'yes' on the table, and let the Lord tell us the 'what.'"

PRAY...

Dear Jesus, I will never ever get over the fact that You took my place on the cross and paid for my sins in full with Your own precious blood! Thank you! I renew my surrender to You today, this moment! I am Yours to be used in whatever way You desire in order to bring about a complete revitalization in our church family. Please stir in us the passionate zeal of the young David when he overheard Goliath's taunting challenges to the armies of Israel; transform us through broken-hearted prayer and fasting like that of Nehemiah and Hannah; shape us into bold, fearless messengers of truth like Esther, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and give us a heart for the untouched, unreached, unsaved world like the Apostle Paul. Jesus, if You don't come through we are finished; but today I believe that with You all things are possible! So, please, work Your miraculous work of revitalization in me and in my church, I ask in Your Everlasting Name, and for Your Eternal glory, Amen.