

PRAYING WITH JESUS:

**40 DAYS TOWARD CHURCH
REVITALIZATION.**



Searching My Own Heart

Days 1-5

TRUE WAY BAPTIST CHURCH

2020.

Adapted from



INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time prayer has been the vital link between God and man. Adam and Eve initially enjoyed intimate, face-to-face fellowship, but after they disobeyed God, their fellowship with Him was broken. Still, human hearts longed for fellowship with their Creator. Adam's and Eve's son Seth established the precedent and priority of prayer for all those who believe in the One True God.

This pattern continued throughout the Old Testament among men and women of faith. Noah spoke with God and "did according to all that the Lord had commanded him" (Genesis 7:5). Abraham and Isaac were men of prayer (Genesis 20:17; 25:21), and Job was so thoroughly acquainted with God that even great personal loss did not cause him to doubt nor curse God (Job 2:10).

Hannah pleaded with God for a son, and prayed with heartfelt thanksgiving when He answered her prayer (1 Samuel 1:11; 2:1-10). Nehemiah was driven to give up a significant career because of his prayer relationship with God (Nehemiah 2:5), and Esther and Daniel put their very lives on the line because of prayer (Esther 4:16; Daniel 6:10). We cannot read about the saints of old without being struck by their prayerful communion with God!

This same lifestyle of prayer continued in the life of Christ (Mark 1:35; John 17; Matthew 26:36-46), the apostles (Acts 1:14), Stephen (Acts 7:60), Peter (Acts 9:40), Paul (Acts 9:11; 1 Timothy 2:1-4), James (James 5:16), John (Revelation 1:10-11), and many others.

Martin Luther once said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." For your church to remain healthy, alive, and vibrant for the Kingdom of God, prayer is non-negotiable. It is our prayer that this guide will help you and your church begin, or continue, the journey to revitalization through whatever method God chooses as He enlightens you during this prayer journey.

The following pages of Scriptures, guiding thoughts, and suggested prayers are designed to help you move through seven critical dimensions of personal and congregational renewal that will strengthen and build the revitalization effort, as you bathe each one in prayer:

- 1) Searching My Own Heart (Days 1-5)
- 2) Rebuilding Trust in God's Word (Days 6-10)
- 3) Honoring Christ's Lordship (Days 11-15)
- 4) Resolving Our Differences (Days 16-19)
- 5) Following Kingdom Leaders (Days 20-26)
- 6) Re-Establishing Jesus' Priorities (Days 27-33)
- 7) Patiently Awaiting Transformation (Days 34-40)

As you read, reflect, and pray, please feel free to add other Spirit-breathed insights to your praying. (All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard translation, unless otherwise noted).

DAY ONE

The Gospel of Mark carries the tone of **urgency** from his first words. *“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)

“...KINDLE AFRESH THE GIFT OF GOD WHICH IS IN YOU... FOR GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF TIMIDITY, BUT OF POWER AND LOVE AND DISCIPLINE.” (2 TIM. 1:6-7).

DO YOU FEEL THE URGENCY?

While many factors have contributed to your church’s current condition, you cannot treat the situation with “kid gloves,” as though your church’s assignment is dispensable.

Your community needs a healthy, vibrant, growing church; the lost people around you need a compassionate, Spirit-led, Great Commission church; and your fellow church members need the warmth, love, hope, and nurture of a faithfully Christ-centered, sacrificial fellowship. It’s time to make ready the way of the Lord; to make His paths straight!

Read Mark 1. Underline how many times the word “immediately” (NASB; ESV), or “at once” or “without delay” (NIV), or “straightway” (KJV), appears. Shouldn’t this urgency compel you and your church to embrace the revitalization process sooner rather than later?

PRAY...

Father, I realize the complete revitalization of Your church depends on my willingness to *“make ready Your way”* now. Jesus, this is your church, I surrender it to you; and I invite you to change me in every way necessary to make Your church a healthy, vibrant, Kingdom-focused people fully living YOUR WAY! Jesus, I *“repent and believe the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). Now is Your time, Jesus! Have Your way!! Use me as Your instrument. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

DAY TWO

Read Luke 10:38-42

PRECONCEIVED IDEAS



This picture is my (the author) preconceived idea of what an ideal life would be – Smokey mountain backdrop, lush farmland, white-frame, two-story house with an old fashioned wooden barn (should be red instead of white). Dreams. Ideas. Not necessarily God's.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

It seems each generation has their own ideas about what the church should do, how it should behave, what songs to sing, and what church buildings should look like, to name just a few areas of strong opinion. Are you willing to surrender your own ideas in order to see your church flourish once again in gospel growth, community impact, and Kingdom advance? Or are you worried and bothered about the potential that things as you have always known them might change if you embrace revitalization?

Martha loved Jesus and eagerly welcomed Him into their home, but she wasn't too happy with her sister Mary. Mary was sitting at the Lord's feet while Martha was distracted with all the household responsibilities. She demanded that Jesus do something about it, but Jesus's response tells us a lot about the things that cause us to be worried and bothered. Unfortunately, those things are usually the wrong priority. Jesus is the priority; making much of Him is the objective of vibrant churches.

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am often worried and bothered about nonessential things instead of keeping my attention fixed on You. Build a new perspective in my heart and mind that longs for spiritual life in our church regardless of what songs we sing, the type of chairs we sit in, or the kind of building we have. Please do whatever it takes to breathe life into us again for the glory of Your Name alone. I ask it in Your strong Name, Amen.

DAY THREE

“AND HE SAID TO THEM, ‘WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?
DO YOU STILL HAVE NO FAITH?’” (MARK 4:40)

FEAR OR FAITH?

Read Mark 4:35-41

Going on a journey with Jesus is not a guarantee for a trouble-free, uneventful adventure. Just ask His disciples. He invited them to cross the Sea of Galilee, and they gladly headed to the privacy of the other shore. Before long, however, Jesus’ kind invitation turned into a nightmare of a storm.

Where was Jesus? Asleep. He understood where they were going and how they would fare on the journey. The disciples didn’t, so they panicked. When their fear-filled pleas woke Him, Jesus stilled the sea and cautioned the men never to doubt what God is doing even in a storm.

The journey of revitalization will bring some stormy moments of fear. Will you gladly trust Jesus when things seem upside down or inside out? Will you choose fear or faith?

PRAY...

Sovereign God, I know in my head that you have created all things and in you all things hold together (Col. 1:16-17). Still there are so many things that I do not know or understand, so I am pleading with You, our Great, Magnificent, All-Powerful God, to calm my fears as we seek your restoring, revitalizing work in our fellowship. Keep my heart and mind at peace in Jesus, in whose Name I pray. Amen.

DAY FOUR

Of course, Mark's gospel account is not the only place in the New Testament wherein a sense of urgency is portrayed. John's gospel records words of urgency directly from Jesus' mouth. "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Read John 9:1-12. Jesus healed the man who had been born blind in order to display the works of God through the man's life. List three things here that would display the works of God in your community if your church pursues, and experiences, revitalization:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

THE UNKNOWNNS

Did you notice the things that were unknown by the participants in John's account of the blind man's healing? His disciples didn't know why the man had been born blind. No one knew how clay could bring sight to blind eyes. The blind man's neighbors did not know how the blind man came to have sight. The blind man did not know where Jesus had gone after Jesus had healed him.

Every situation has unknown factors. Generally, we don't like having unknown factors because we like to have everything under **our** control. But in the work of revitalization you will encounter unexpected unknowns for which you could not plan. What will you do with them? Will you be willing, just like the participants in the blind man's healing, to trust every detail to Jesus? Are you ready to entrust all the unknown factors in the revitalization of your church to His sovereign rule?

PRAY...

Lord Jesus, I must admit that the whole business of revitalizing our church is somewhat frightening. There are many unknowns. Yet, it is also exciting to think about the lives that will be changed and the influence we can have once again in our community for the sake of the Gospel! Still, Lord, I am sure there will be things about this revitalization that will be uncomfortable for me personally; things that will be out of my control. I want to say with all my heart today that -- I trust You! You spoke everything into existence! You are the substance by which all things are held together! I believe You will gloriously handle all the unknowns that come into play in the complete revitalization of our church. I trust You to do it! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY FIVE

Read Psalm 111

A PRAYER OF PRAISE...

Now, join the Psalmist in praising and thanking God for His goodness, His works, His righteousness, His gifts, His power, His redemption, and His covenant. Write words of praise below:

Lord, I praise you for your...

A PLACE FOR PRAISE

You can probably remember when, in an earlier day, there was a general sense of excitement among your fellow church members; a time when the place of worship was filled with the praises of God's people. That is God's intent for the gathering place of His people. That is what Jesus expected to find when He entered the Temple in the First Century. "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'... have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself?'" (Matthew 21:13, 16). Prayer. Praise. In His house. Among His people. Can it begin again with you?

PRAY...

Father, I can remember when we gathered with people on our church campus with excitement about You, Your goodness, grace, mercy and love. I remember when we filled our gathering place with praise to Your Holy Name. O God, restore those days among us through Your miraculous revitalizing work in our church. I believe it is urgent that You act now to restore us to Your purpose. We are desperate for You; change us for the sake of Your eternal and glorious PRAISE! Let Your praise fill our hearts and our gathering place once again.