

40 DAYS OF *prayer*



THE ALLIANCE

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 3

SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT/FULLNESS

Having now turned from things that were grieving and quenching the Spirit, in this week we prayerfully welcome His fullness and power. May there be a sense of hunger and holy desperation as we pray for a fresh outpouring and infilling of the Holy Spirit on our lives and in our churches. Come, Holy Spirit!

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THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

KRISY MAXEY

The Holy Spirit is introduced in Genesis 1. Throughout the Old Testament we see the Spirit moving with power among God's people. In the gospels, John the Baptist declared there is One more powerful who will come. "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 1:8).

In John 14–16 Jesus introduced the "Alongsider" (*paraclete* means "called to one's side"), raising high expectations of the One coming after Him. After the Resurrection, Jesus spoke again about this promised gift. ". . . in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4, 5).

But it wasn't until Jesus had been gone for 50 days that the Holy Spirit blew through the small band of followers, baptizing them with miraculous *dunamis* ("power to do"). Acts tells compellingly of a new power for living the gospel—preaching, helping the disadvantaged, worshiping, praying, and healing. And when we meet Paul on his third missionary journey about 20 years later, he's in the city of Ephesus with a group of believers. "Hey guys! Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? No? You haven't even heard of Him? Let me introduce you!" (see Acts 19:1–6). And the Holy Spirit came with power just as Christ promised.

A thrilling expectation accompanies these introductions. The Holy Spirit flames uniquely before us in truth, advocacy, comfort, and power. Come! Meet this Person yourself; Jesus longs to baptize you.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Reflect on how you first met Jesus. Thank the Holy Spirit for the hunger planted in you, and remember key growth points since that time. Then enjoy the memory of your "second baptism." Spend time in gratefulness and joy.
2. If you don't have a clear moment when you were filled by the Spirit, declare your desire to meet Him. Position your body to indicate your openness (open your hands, kneel, etc.).
3. Pray the following: "Come, Holy Spirit, as the transforming Alongsider promised by Jesus. Grow my capacity to receive all I need from You. Transform my comprehension; instruct me in truth; comfort and strengthen me; fill me with an ability to introduce You to others. I want to know You. I desire to be transformed by You. Come!"

THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER JAMES CHUNG

In Ezekiel 1, the prophet had lost his country, his career as a priest, and his future. The hand of God was upon him in a foreign land. He then saw a heavenly vision of four living creatures—each had the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (see Ezekiel 1:10). The lion is the king of the beasts, the ox the king of livestock, the eagle the king of the sky, and the human the king of all creatures. Later, Ezekiel saw the Lord enthroned in all His glory. He fell on his face.

When the apostle John was imprisoned in Patmos, he too saw four living creatures while in the Spirit: one like a lion, the second like an ox, the third with a face like a man, and the fourth like an eagle, worshipping the one on the throne (see Revelation 4:7). Like Ezekiel, John fell as though dead.

We've also seen God's glory in our journey. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Jesus is the glory of the Father, and the cross was the climax of His glory. We have all seen His glory in the cross. We fell at His feet and wept in the presence of the Spirit.

The apostle Paul said, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Recall a moment you wept in the presence of the Spirit. Ask the Lord to open your heart, then pour out your heart and share with the Lord your feelings.
2. Declare to the Lord the words from your soul to bring Him what He deserves.
3. Express your deep desire and longing to see His glory in the presence of the Spirit.

OUR BATTLE WITH THE OLD NATURE

PETER BURGO

We've all seen the classic horror scene with the hand reaching from the grave to snag an unsuspecting soul back into the depths. While it's easy to dismiss this macabre imagery as the fabrication of a fright-mongering filmmaker, we can't as easily dismiss the reality that the old man we "put to death" often reaches from the grave to try to drag us back.

Therein lies the trap that leaves us vulnerable and unsuspecting: our mistaken assumption that the old man will rest in his banished torment and cease to be a threat. Scripture offers a threefold warfare plan to help us avoid ambush.

Be watchful. 1 Peter 5:8

Our old, sinful nature—along with the enemy who arouses it—lies in wait for any opportunity to strike. Like a predator seeking its prey, it launches its attacks when we are tired, weak, and vulnerable. Jesus warned His disciples of this in that crucial hour (see Matthew 26:41).

Suit up for daily battle. Ephesians 6:10–18

Although it's true that Jesus conquered sin and death once and for all, He still leads us into daily battle to retain—and sometimes reclaim—the territory He won. The armor He furnished us is to be kept battle ready and donned daily—not left rusting in a closet to be hastily retrieved after the enemy has already stormed the gates.

Dwell in protected territory. Psalm 91

Although our battle-readiness sometimes requires that we advance into enemy territory to reclaim a hill, we must always retreat back to the place of protection and restoration: Our *Refuge. Mighty Fortress. Strong Tower. Hiding Place*. The soul finds its rest—and its righteousness—in the shadow of the Almighty.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Read 1 Peter 5:8, asking the Lord to keep you watchful throughout the day.
2. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and put on the full armor piece by piece as you pray.
3. Read Psalm 91, reflecting on how His shadow protects you from the "old nature."

THE FAILURE OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT

JOHN STUMBO

God has a long history of telling His people He wants them to do and be what He knows they can't do or be. He often places us in positions where we see our need of Him. Why? Because He knows we will experience Him most fully when we realize we need Him most completely.

His call contrasts common human thinking. "Be all you can be. Believe in yourself and unleash your full potential." Such teaching has become so common we may not recognize its error.

The Bible teaches we are at our best not by discovering our human potential but in discovering our human limitation—believing that a divine source is available to us.

From my vantage point, the U.S. evangelical church has a decent understanding of salvation but a poor one of sanctification. Many Christians give their lives to Christ in faith but think they can live their lives for Him by works. We typically believe in sanctification by works. We delight that we are saved by grace but then despair, attempting to achieve sanctification by effort.

My brothers and sisters—be encouraged. The entrance to salvation and the pathway of sanctification are the same: humble dependence upon and faith in the One who saves and sanctifies us.

Yes, we participate. We respond, believe, accept, trust. But we don't control or contrive.

The sanctified life is not passive ("I have no participation), nor is it a life of initiation ("It's up to me to get this right"). It is a life of cooperation: "I yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit in my life."



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Be thankful that God desires to live His life through us by His Spirit (see John 7:37-39).
2. Welcome the Spirit to fill you and grant you everything you need to do what He calls you to do and be who He desires you to be (see 2 Peter 1:3).

FULLY SURRENDERED

KELVIN WALKER

Galatians 5:25 is a challenging verse: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” It’s challenging because keeping in step with the Spirit requires surrender. No one likes that word. To me, it means giving up control. And I don’t like to be controlled by anyone.

Yet living a Spirit-filled life means daily coming to terms with and willingly surrendering to the Spirit’s control in my life. Here’s the beautiful thing. For every moment that I surrender to the Spirit, He promises a fresh outpouring and filling of Himself. And, as I am filled with the Spirit, He provides the empowerment I need to keep in step with Him.

In recent years, God has been using one question to let me know it’s time for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit: “Do I have your ‘yes’ no matter the outcome?” Each time He asks that question, I know that my “yes” will require surrendering my control to the leading and voice of the Holy Spirit. Yet each time I say yes, I receive a fresh outpouring of the Spirit that empowers me to keep in step with Him and to live my life in Him as He lives His life through me.

That same empowerment is available to you. It begins with a simple phrase of surrender: “Yes, Lord . . . no matter the outcome, I say yes to You.”

Fully surrendered—Lord, I am Thine;
Fully surrendered, Savior divine!
Live Thou Thy life in me;
All fullness dwells in Thee;
Not I, but Christ in me.
—From “Fully Surrendered,” by Alfred C. Snead



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Prayerfully consider your current life situation. Do you see areas where you are out-of-step with the Spirit? If so, confess those and surrender them to His control.
2. Welcome in prayer a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your life.
3. Can you truly say that God has your “yes” in everything He’s asking you to do? If not, sincerely give it to Him as you pray through your life this week.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

TERRY SMITH

The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we trust Jesus as Savior. Before this, we had only the sin nature, or the flesh, in us. It is the Spirit who brings to life within us the new nature. However, the flesh is not pulled out by its roots. In this life, both natures will always be in us. The Spirit and the flesh are in conflict, and both want control.

How do we overcome the influence of the flesh? In The Alliance we believe the answer comes in both a decisive and ongoing surrender to the Spirit. In Galatians 5, when Paul calls us to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, he's referring to our ongoing daily experience of welcoming the Spirit's control and experiencing the fullness of His power (see Galatians 5:16, 25).

Paul depicts the Christian life as a step-by-step walk in which we seek the Spirit's strength and direction for our small daily choices and big life-decisions. I walk almost every morning. The path I take and the turns I make control my destination. In the Christian life, allowing the Spirit to direct our steps each day enables us to experience life in such a way that we look more and more like Jesus.

Even if we had a transformative experience with the Spirit in our past, we must ask ourselves if we're living under the Spirit's control right now. If so, we'll find ourselves increasingly overcoming attitudes and behaviors that marked our old way of life—and experiencing the freedom and fullness of new life in Jesus.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Acknowledge your inability to overcome the flesh.
2. Pray daily to surrender your whole life to the fullness and control of the Holy Spirit.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your life that are not Christlike—then ask for His power to change.

THE SPIRIT'S POWER FOR MINISTRY JONATHAN SCHAEFFER

The Bible is full of amazing promises. Have we considered how many of those are conditional? God forgives us . . . when we confess our sins to Him (see 1 John 1:9). He blesses us . . . when we honor our parents (see Ephesians 6:1–3). God guides us . . . when we acknowledge Him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:5–6). There is something God asks of us.

The same is true if we want to experience daily the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells His followers, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). This is one of the most remarkable promises in the Bible—He actually comes to live in us. What’s the condition for experiencing that most fully? Obedience to Jesus’ teaching. Peter puts it this way: “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32).

The Spirit is a gift from the Father, received by grace. There is a sense in which He has freedom to influence us, empower us, and work in our lives—when we obey Him. We surrender, boldly follow, and relinquish anything that displeases Jesus. We could say it this way: Our level of obedience determines our level of blessability. This kind of obedience isn’t mere religious duty. Jesus says we want to please Him because we love Him.

Do you want Him to work powerfully in you and through you? By His grace and power, commit today to obey Jesus in every area of your life.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Lord, thank You for keeping Your promises to actually take up residence in me.
2. I confess anything that threatens my relationship with You. Cleanse me so You are completely at home in my life.
3. Empower me to walk in obedience to You so I can be fully “blessable” and serve as Your instrument wherever and however You want to use me today.