

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 1

WAKE UP NOW

Romans 13:11

Every day, we wake up and go through our day full of tasks. In Romans 13:11, God calls us to spiritually wake up now: "Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." Each day that passes is a day closer to when we will experience the culmination of our salvation as we are with our Savior for all eternity. As we begin our 40 Days of Prayer, let's take time to prepare ourselves spiritually through activities we experience on a daily basis. We begin our day with opening our eyes to His reality around us and surrendering ourselves anew to all He has for us. So, as we go throughout our week, let's wake up now to the reality that salvation is near.

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OPEN YOUR EYES

2 KINGS 6:8-23

When was the last time you had your eyes checked? It is recommended that people get their eyes checked annually; yet, reportedly, almost 40 percent of Americans have not had their eyes checked in the past year.

For Christians, it is important to have our spiritual eyes checked. Jesus says that our bodies will be full of light if our eyes are healthy, but having bad eyes reveals that our lives are full of darkness (Matt. 6:22-23).

So, how do we get a spiritual eye exam? In 2 Kings 6:8-23, the King of Syria is upset with the prophet Elisha and orders his army to take him out. With the Syrian army closing in, Elisha's servant is gripped with fear. Calmly, Elisha prays that God would "open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17). Here, the request is for God to give the servant eyes of faith that can see beyond the natural to the spiritual.

With his eyes opened, the servant sees God's army surrounding the prophet. Confident in God's provision and protection, Elisha and his servant can keep doing the Lord's work—free from fear and reservation.

If you are struggling with fear and doubt and find it difficult to trust God, maybe you, too, suffer from weak eyes. Humbly ask God to correct your vision and help you "fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, my spiritual eyes are not good. For too long, I have fixed my eyes myself and relied on my own strengths and abilities. God, in Your great mercy, would You give me new eyes of faith that can see beyond the natural to the spiritual? Help my eyes be fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith (Heb. 12:2) so that my mind will be set on things above and not consumed with earthly things (Col. 3:2). I love You. Thank You for first loving me. Amen.

KNEEL DOWN IN SURRENDER

ROMANS 12:1-2

In the past several years, I battled with God over control of my life. In a period of crisis, His Spirit showed me that my desire for control was rooted in a lack of trust. Did I truly believe God was who He said He was and could do what He said He would do? When the world was telling me and showing me that no one was trustworthy, did I believe God could be trusted to not break my heart? Did I believe God's plans were meant for good? I begged Him to help my unbelief.

As I made progress, I was frustrated that I kept struggling with taking back control. As I talked (yelled) to God about this, His Spirit spoke into me: "Manna for today." "No," I said, "make it now. You can make this struggle and battle go away." But I knew His way was best, that by daily handing my control over to Him and submitting to His will, I would begin each day in a posture of humility, knowing I could do none of this on my own. If He made it so I could easily do it, I would forget that it is He that is doing it in me.

So, I begin every day asking God to use me as He wills, in however gives Him the most glory. I ask that I would follow His desires and not my own and that I would remember He is God and I am not.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, it is so easy to look at what is happening right in front of us and make choices on our own. But You know the whole picture and what is best for us. Help us to daily lay down our lives and plans and seek Your perfect way. Show us Your will as we walk throughout our day. Show us what is good and acceptable and perfect. In this, help us show the world who You are—only by Your grace. Amen.

BATHE IN HIS FAITHFULNESS

PSALM 118

I am not a huge fan of baths; I prefer a hot shower—in and out, clean, but with no wasted time. Bathing, on the other hand, is about luxuriously soaking in a tub, taking your time. When we bathe in the Lord’s faithfulness, we need to take our time in it. Faithfulness, by its very definition, can never be over quickly. It is a constant companion.

In Psalm 118:1–4, the phrase “his faithful love endures forever” repeats four times. Each time, the group who is called upon to say the phrase changes: the reader, Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear the Lord. We are called upon to acknowledge His faithful love because it is a demonstration of how He is good, and it reminds us to trust Him in the future. All people are called to bathe in God’s faithfulness because of what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do.

At Council 2023, the lens of “past, present, and future” was also used to look at what He is doing in the Alliance family around the world. We have seen God’s faithfulness in the growth of the Alliance family both in the United States and around the globe. Let us soak up that reminder and look to the future as we continue to enjoy the faithfulness of God in our lives—in the good times and the bad times.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord God, together we give You thanks, for You are good. Your faithful love endures forever. Not because of our own work, not due to any inherent goodness of our own, but because of who You are, You have demonstrated that faithful love repeatedly in our lives. Remind us of our need to bathe in Your faithful love each day. Help us soak it up so that we cannot take any more in and so that we overflow that faithful love to the people who are around us. Amen.

GET DRESSED IN THE ARMOR

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

Could you imagine waking up one day and leaving your head on the pillow as you went about your day? Yeah, I know that is an extreme example, but how often do we wake up and forget to put on the full armor of God? Just as we wouldn't be able to make it without our head, we cannot make it without the full armor of God. Ephesians 6 tells us to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," but it doesn't stop there. It tells us to arm ourselves daily with the armor of God because the battles that we face are not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

If we are to withstand evil days, we must guard ourselves with truth. We must prepare our steps with the gospel of peace. Most importantly, we must grab our shield of faith that protects us from the fiery trials that are going to come our way. We also must prepare our minds with understanding that our salvation comes only through Christ! Finally, we need to grab hold of the sword, our weapon against the attacks of the enemy.

Remembering to do this will not only prepare you for the day, but it will also protect you from the certain attacks that the enemy is mounting up against us daily!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we thank You for giving us the tools necessary to fight against the evil one. We thank You for Your continued mercy and grace that You show us every day. We ask that You always remind us of the importance of putting on the whole armor You have provided to us. We thank You that we do not have to fight this battle alone and that we are equipped, not only with the armor, but also with the assurance that we have in our Savior Christ Jesus, who has already secured the victory for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

MEDITATE ON THE WORD

PSALM 119:97-104

Sometimes it's not about waking up but about staying awake in the truth and goodness of God. The writer of Psalm 119 had a habit of feasting on the goodness of the truth of God. Notice the exclamations of the writer: "Oh how I love your law!" and "How sweet are your words to my taste!" He loved God's law, and he considered the words of God to be sweeter than honey. He loved to meditate on God's law and statutes, even to the point of meditating on them all day long.

The writer delighted in God's truth and was thankful that it made him wiser than his enemies, more insightful than his teachers, and more understanding than his elders. He had feasted so much and so regularly on God's commands that they were "always with" him. Instead of being sleepy, he lived an attentive and energized life that hated every wrong path.

Our goal in walking with God is not to master Bible reading. We don't view reading God's Word as part of the checklist for being a good disciple. We delight in God's Word because it helps us know God and reflect His goodness. We feast on it because we have discovered its sweetness. As Jesus said, "The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life" (John 6:63). Both waking up and staying awake are only possible with the truth of God capturing our minds and hearts.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, Your Word is so good and does so much good for us. "You are good and what you do is good; teach us your decrees" (Psalm 119:68). Protect us from letting Your Word become a burden to us. Protect us from letting the reading and studying of Your Word become part of a lifeless checklist. Give us grace to experience the sweetness of Your words and to know the joy of their wisdom, insight, and understanding. May meditating on Your Word be our delightful habit all the days of our lives. Amen.

STAND UP FOR TRUTH

MATTHEW 10:16-31

Jesus compared the disciples to sheep, a notoriously simpleminded creature, yet perfectly created to follow a shepherd that would keep them safe from harm. In moments of spiritual crisis or physical threat, we should follow the Good Shepherd's voice. But if we are honest, such moments often reveal the worst of our "sheepish" tendencies.

Under attack, do we separate from the flock and self-isolate? Or do we vie for control over our lives, ignoring the commands of the Shepherd? Do we become catatonic, stuck in a way of life, ignoring the problem even as it consumes us?

In crisis moments, standing in the power of the Holy Spirit requires attunement and attachment to the Father. Like snakes, which react in milliseconds, our senses should be heightened to the Kingdom reality around us. Like doves, we are to be innocent of a worldly mindset of self-interest and self-gain, formed instead by the love of our Friend, Savior, and Shepherd—Jesus.

Jesus promised He would not leave us as orphans. Though He is ever-present, by God's grace, we often hear Him more clearly in moments of persecution and testing. The outpouring of Holy Spirit wisdom blesses and convicts believers, "governors and kings," and Gentiles alike. The Truth drives out worry about what we will say or do in moments of crisis and instead empowers us to stand in the love and power of our Abba Father. We only have to slow down and listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father God, our loving Shepherd, we know we cannot stand firm in truth unless we are formed by truth. We confess that we often allow our fears to drown out Your voice. Reveal to us how we have gone astray. Grant us a Kingdom mindset so we may perceive where You are moving and leading us today. Keep us free from self-interest, but, Holy Spirit, speak truth to us and through us so that those around us may also experience the same freeing power of Your love and truth. Amen.

REST IN HIM

PSALM 23

If we meditate on Psalm 23, we can see an invitation to rest in the care of our loving God: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). We are reminded that in every season of life, our Heavenly Shepherd provides for us, and we can rest in contentment knowing we do not lack what is essential.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:2). Our God leads us to places of tranquility and restoration. He knows our souls are weary and leads us into His presence to bring us the nourishment and rejuvenation we need.

“He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3). We can rest knowing that our loving Father leads us down paths that align with His will and bring honor and glory to His name.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4). When darkness tries to cloud our journey, we can rest knowing that our God is ever-present. We can take courage in His unwavering presence to navigate through life’s challenges.

“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me . . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6). We can embrace the promise of God’s goodness and unfailing love that accompanies us throughout our days, and ultimately, we will find our eternal dwelling place in His presence, where perfect rest and peace awaits.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for providing for us, for being ever-present with us, and for the promise of eternal rest in Your presence through Jesus Christ. We ask for rejuvenation for our tired bodies, minds, and souls. We place all of our burdens into Your hands and trust that You will provide the rest that we need. Thank You for Your unfailing love and for being the Shepherd that we so desperately need, in whom we find our rest. We love You so much, Lord. It’s in Your name we pray, amen.