

Week 2

Day 8: Ask, seek, knock

Read Matthew 7:7-12

"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

The Bible is clear that God answers the fervent prayers of His people according to His will, and we know it is His will for His church to be revitalized and healthy. Perhaps revival tarries because we give up on prayer too soon.

A small girl watched as her mother smeared cold cream on her face. She asked, "Mommy, why are you doing that?" "To make myself beautiful," the mother replied. In a few moments, as the mother started wiping off the cream, the child asked, "Are you giving up already?"

We should never give up in prayer as we ask God to revitalize our churches. In fact, we should pray regularly and intensely until the answer comes. The verbs "ask, seek, and knock" are expressed in a form that denotes continuous action. Jesus is literally saying, "Ask, and keep on asking. Seek, and keep on seeking. Knock, and keep on knocking."

Do you regularly pray with intensity for the growth of your church? If your church needs to be revitalized, whatever you do, do not quit praying until the answer comes. Ask, seek, and knock!

Prayer

Begin your journey of ongoing, fervent prayer for your church's growth today. God will answer in His time.

Day 9: Value His name

Read 1 Samuel 12:20-22

"Samuel replied, 'Don't be afraid. Even though you have committed all this evil, don't turn away from following the LORD. Instead, worship the LORD with all your heart. Don't turn away to follow worthless things that can't profit or deliver you; they are worthless. The LORD will not abandon His people, because of His great name and because He has determined to make you His own people.'" 1 Samuel 12:20-22

The past few years have changed the value of many things: houses, retirement accounts, salaries, etc. There will be long-lasting effects on the companies and individuals impacted. Value is something that changes. What would it be like if something of great value never changed?

The value of something that is priceless remains priceless throughout all eternity. Yes, each of us knows that we have a priceless Savior!

These verses in 1 Samuel remind us that even during times when we have sinned against the Lord, we must not turn from HIM. The name of the Lord has great VALUE for us. One of the ways we see the value of the Lord is that He will not forsake His people. Not that we have that much value, but because His name and reputation are that valuable.

Do you see the value of the name of the LORD? Does your life reflect how much value you see in the Lord?

Prayer

Pray today that the value of God's name would be seen in your life so that a world may see HIM. Pray that your church would reflect the value of the name of the LORD

Day 10: Bear fruit of the Holy Spirit

Read Galatians 5:22-26

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

As followers of Jesus, we are to yield daily to the control of the Holy

Spirit. Verse 25 encourages us to "live by the Spirit" and "follow the Spirit." The tangible evidence that the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives is spiritual fruit.

Just as an apple is the outward evidence of the inner reality of an apple tree, so the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the outward evidence that the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives.

When the Holy Spirit is in control, our lives will be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. God's plan is to produce all of these qualities in us as we yield to Him. When the Holy Spirit is not in control of our lives, we are unloving, joyless, restless, impatient, unkind, and out of control.

If the person who knows you best used the qualities in verses 22 and 23 as a checklist, what words would they choose to describe you? Would they describe you as a loving person? A person characterized by joy? Would they refer to you as a patient person? A kind person?

Prayer

Yield today to the work of the Holy Spirit in you. Ask God to produce in you the fruit of His Holy Spirit.

Day 11: Forfeit my agenda

Read Luke 22:39-46

"Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me — nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done."

Luke 22:42

Jesus was fully God and fully man. In this passage, we see the humanity of Jesus as He struggles with the will of the Father in light of His imminent suffering and death. Jesus realized that in a few short hours, He would carry the weight of the world's sin in his body. The Scripture states that, "He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

As Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed with such intensity that His "sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (verse 44). On the one hand, He wanted the Father to remove the cup of suffering. On the other hand, He realized that the same suffering and death were necessary for the salvation of precious souls and the fulfillment of the Father's plan for Him. Therefore, He ultimately prayed, "Not my will but Yours be done."

Above all, Jesus wanted the will of the Father to be carried out in His life.

Prayer

Pray today that you would be willing to lay down your own plans, preferences and your own agenda for your church so that the plan of God might be carried out. Pray as Jesus did, "Not my will but Yours be done."

Day 12: Be Controlled by the Spirit

"For those who live according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit." Romans 8:5

The text in Romans 8:5 reminds us that by nature, we are controlled by sinful desires. That we are born as sinners is not unbelievable to us because it is so easy to live life as a sinner, right? The text also tells us that those controlled by the Spirit respond in a spiritual way. In a normal day, as things happen around us, how we respond shows which we are controlled by: our sinful nature or our spiritual nature.

We must choose what controls us, whether our sinful nature or our spiritual nature.

How would your life be different if every day you chose to be controlled by your spiritual nature? What about your church? Over these next weeks, ask God to speak to you and guide you to the growth of your spiritual life and your church.

Prayer

Pray that God will show you areas of your life you need to allow Him to control. Also, pray for the leaders in your church to be guided by Him.

Day 13: Forgive One Another

Read Ephesians 4:25-32

"And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ." Ephesians 4:32

One thing we all have in common is that we have all been hurt by other people. Others have said or done things that have hurt us. Sometimes we have been hurt by what someone failed to say or do. The issue in life is not “will we be hurt,” but “how will we respond when we are hurt by others?”

The Scripture passage for today cites several possible responses that often accompany the hurts we encounter: anger (verse 26), bitterness, wrath, and malice (verse 31). When we identify these things in our lives, we are challenged to “remove” or “put away” these things. In place of these responses, we are called to choose the response of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the way God has chosen to relate to us. Forgiveness is the way God encourages us to relate to each other. Forgiveness means we treat the person in the future as if they had not hurt us in the past. Forgiveness involves refusing to relate to the person out of anger and bitterness. Forgiveness means we choose to extend grace to the person who hurt us.

Have you harbored anger, bitterness, wrath, or malice toward someone in your church? Take time today to confess your sinful response to that person. Choose with the help and grace of God to forgive that person.

Prayer

Ask God to identify the presence of unforgiveness in your life. Confess the sin of unforgiveness. Ask God to produce in your life a humility that honors Him.

Day 14: Raise Up New Leaders

Read II Timothy 2:1-2

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” II Timothy 2:2

One of the common needs voiced by pastors and church members is the need for more leaders. These concerned people of God are saying we need people to lead in the children’s programs, to work with youth, to do outreach, to give financially for the work of the church, and on and on. But where will these leaders come from unless they move into your area from another community or transfer to your church from another congregation?

Paul gives Timothy the answer concerning the need for more leaders: You raise them up. Christian leaders are made, not born, and II Timothy 2:2 tells how to make one. Mature Christian leaders are to teach and train faithful people who can become leaders and then teach and train others.

Are you willing to personally train another person in your church to become a leader or would you be willing to be trained yourself to eventually lead in some way in your church?

Prayer

Please pray today that God will give your congregation a vision and a plan for developing new leaders from within the church family.

Spiritual Renewal Begins in Me

Investing Through Group Connection

LifeWay Research recently responded to research data by stating that spiritual maturity comes through “intentionality...in a disciple’s life.”

Investing regularly in a small group is an important piece of an intentional spiritual renewal plan for a disciple. Just as an ember pulled out of the fire goes out, so also is spiritual progress extinguished when a disciple separates from other believers.

But spiritual renewal and progress demand more from the small group experience than simply regular attendance. Consider the following ten actions you can take to raise the level of your investment through your group in your spiritual renewal and progress.

Support your spiritual growth and group by . . .

- seeking God in Bible study daily.
- Praying for and inviting guests to group meetings.
- communicating regularly with group members.
- fellowshipping with group members and guests.
- helping group members in need.
- reading and preparing for group meetings.
- participating honestly and openly in group meetings.
- living out the truths discussed in group meetings.
- serving in some way to strengthen the group and church.
- supporting efforts to launch new leaders and start new groups.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 (1 is weak and 10 is strong) in each of these areas. On which of these could you be more intentional in supporting your spiritual growth and your group? Ask God to help you, and ask a group member to encourage you to take steps in the month ahead. If you are not currently in a group, take an intentional step of spiritual renewal and growth by joining a group this week.