

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 4

REAWAKENING TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church was purchased by Christ, initiated by Christ, and is under the ownership and leadership of Christ. He is in the position to tell us the purpose and function of the Church, and we are to submit to His ownership and headship. Think about Jesus' intent for the Church and how we are to live into that intent. Pray for an open heart.

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THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST AS ITS HEAD EPHESIANS 1:22

Christ as the Head of the Church is not so much about the Church's subordinate position as it is about Christ's supremacy in everything, including the Church. A focus on a church's duty to submit emphasizes what we are doing, but a focus on Christ's supremacy fixes our eyes on who leads the Church.

Paul reminds the Ephesians that Christ is seated at God's right hand "in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet . . ." (Eph. 1:20–22). It is this high and exalted Christ whom God has appointed to be Head of the Church.

The Church with Christ as its Head does not need to worry about political upheaval, economic downturns, or crumbling religiosity. There is absolutely no need for mudslinging, handwringing, or doomsday-ing when we know "his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). No matter how dire or disastrous things may appear for the Church, we do not need to be riled up with anger or overwhelmed with despair because we know that with the high and exalted Christ as its Head, the Church will prevail.

In our current times of scandals, sociopolitical schisms, and declining church attendance, let us fix our eyes once again on Christ, the Head of the Church, who is seated at God's right hand.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Turn your gaze upon the high and exalted Christ, worshiping Him in His supremacy and thanking Him for His leadership of the universal Church and your local church.
2. Confess any anxieties you may have about the Church's position in society, power in politics, or reputation in the world.
3. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart so that you will know His incomparably great power for us who believe.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BODY

EPHESIANS 1:23

Christ's Body—what a powerful image to describe the Church. Think about your body and all that happens in and through your skin, bones, muscles, brain, and heart. With our bodies, we move; we touch; we speak; we see; we eat; we rest; we hear; we smile; we weep; we embrace; we serve; we feel pain; we show compassion; and we love. And the Church is collectively described as the living, moving, breathing Body of our Lord and King.

This is both a wonderful and sobering reality—one we must acknowledge with joy and responsibility. What a privilege it is to be the arms and legs and voice of Christ in the world. What an honor that, despite our deep brokenness, He chooses to manifest Himself through us. This honor comes with great responsibility. We are to reflect Christ at all times and in all things—in how we love one another, navigate conflict, serve our communities, celebrate, lament, care for “the least of these” among us, and in how we proclaim His good news.

If we become overwhelmed by the seeming impossibility of this calling, let us remember that Christ is the one who “fills all in all.” It is only through His filling, the indwelling of His Spirit, that our bones come to life, that breath fills our lungs, and that He is made known through us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Praise God for the honor of being Christ's Body.
2. Ask His forgiveness for the ways you have relied on your own strength and failed to reflect Him.
3. Pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to empower the Church to live as His Body.

» by Anya Holcomb

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S FAMILY

EPHESIANS 2:19

Have you ever experienced what it feels like to be a foreigner, a stranger? As a new worker overseas, I did. It took a friend welcoming me into her household and giving me her family name before I felt like I truly belonged. To this day, many of my dearest friends know me as Bintou Diallo.

As Christ-followers, one of our greatest blessings is being a part of God's family. We no longer go through life seeking to belong because we've found our rightful place. Our Abba knows us by name, and we are His cherished children.

In God's family, we are all on equal footing. It's a running joke in my family—made up of four girls and one boy—that my brother is the favored one. To prove it, he has a coffee mug that says, "I love how we all know that I'm your favorite child."

Unlike my parents, God doesn't play favorites. We were all unworthy, each of us saved by grace, and we are all equal heirs.

God's household is a global family. On that great day when the multitudes gather, there will be peoples from every nation, tribe, and language worshiping the Lamb. What a glorious family reunion it will be!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Spend some time thanking God for the gift of being a part of His family.
2. Ask the Lord to reveal to you someone who's estranged, left out, or feeling marginalized and needing to find their rightful place in God's family.
3. Search your heart. Have you looked at a brother or sister in Christ and felt they were unworthy of their equal place in God's household? Repent.
4. Pray for our global family. Pray especially for persecuted brothers and sisters whose earthly families have abandoned them.

THE CHURCH AS THE DWELLING OF GOD'S SPIRIT EPHESIANS 2:21-22

Recently, as I was driving, I saw a handwritten sign posted by the road. It said: “Repent or Hell.” It immediately triggered frustration within me. Why would those three words create frustration? As I pondered and prayed, I realized this reductionist message was missing the entire gospel work of Jesus Christ and His love for all people.

Ephesians 2:21 says that our identity and position in this life and for eternity is “in Him.” Those two powerful words are centered on the work and love of Christ. God chose us to be His Church, His Body. Then, He sends His Holy Spirit to empower us.

The Holy Spirit is not weak, timid, or tired, so when we, or the church, are weak, timid, or tired, it often reflects that we are not being fully surrendered to the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn't force Himself on us. He waits for the invitation; He longs for us to fully surrender to Him. We need to daily surrender to the Holy Spirit and invite Him to take charge of our lives and every trial we face.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Take a moment today to thank the Lord that He chose you and purchased you to be His Body. You are the Church.
2. Surrender to the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit so that His work can be done in you and through you for His glory.
3. Ask God for opportunity and boldness to proclaim the love of Jesus Christ to those in your world who desperately need our Savior.

» by David Gilmore

THE CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST EPHESIANS 5:22-33

The heading in my Bible for today's passage of Scripture reads, "Wives and Husbands," so it's not surprising that most of the time we read this section of Scripture through that lens. But as I read today's passage through a different frame of reference, the Church as the Bride of Christ, the passage is even more convicting.

Christ's love for His Bride, the Church, and His desire to see its beauty and splendor is front and center. Do you see it?

Christ's sacrifice on the cross makes it possible for His Bride to be purified and purged from sin. Today's passage aligns with John 17:17-19 when Jesus prays in the garden, "sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth." If Christ's heart for His Bride is to be set apart, dedicated, and made holy, how are we to prepare for that glorious day?

Preparation is key with weddings. I'm reminded of this again as my son, Jeremy, and his fiancée, Sydney, prepare for their wedding in June. They have spent a lot of time intentionally choosing a venue, photographer, wedding party, and guests.

How are you intentionally preparing the Bride of Christ for His return? Perhaps, like me, your heart is broken with this sobering reminder.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God what wedding attire you need to put on (see Colossians 3:12-14).
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the sanctifying work that He wants to do in your church or ministry.
3. Pray that the Lord will open your eyes to the truths He wants you to teach or speak about in 2022.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-20

The dictionary defines the word “ambassador” as: “An accredited diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country . . . a person who acts as a promoter of a specified activity.” As ambassadors for Christ and citizens of heaven, we are His representatives on earth and have been given “the ministry of reconciliation.”

In a world that tries to define the role of the Church in worldly, unbiblical ways, let us not forget that our calling as Christ’s ambassadors is to proclaim without apology that: the Kingdom of God has come; the way of salvation and reconciled relationship with the Father is through the atoning work of Christ on the cross; anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; a reconciled relationship with the Father makes way for reconciled relationship with one another; and “all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18).

We are Christ’s ambassadors. We carry the ministry of reconciliation! The Church is the answer to racial unity and racial harmony in a world that is filled with racism, discrimination, and division. This ministry of reconciliation starts with the gospel, is at the heart of the gospel, and reaches beyond the walls of the Church as we take the gospel to the world. So, in the words of the apostle Paul, I “implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that the Church, as citizens of heaven, will be Christ’s ambassadors first and foremost.
2. Pray that the Church will preach and live out the ministry of reconciliation—to God and to those who bear His image—for the sake of the gospel.
3. Ask the Lord where you might have blind spots as His ambassador that need to be corrected by His Spirit.

THE CHURCH AS THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE TRUTH 1 TIMOTHY 3:15

On December 23, 1972, the capital city of Managua, Nicaragua, was filled with joyful anticipation, ready to celebrate Christmas. However, at 12:29 a.m., a 6.3 magnitude earthquake with destructive intensity sifted the entire city. My mom's family was one of many who found themselves without a dwelling place. Lovingly, her uncle stepped in and built a house for the family. As he worked, he taught my uncles the importance of a strong foundation, support beams, and load-bearing walls. He also shared that in ancient cities, pillars were commonly used to make proclamations by pinning important messages directly on the pillar itself. That house still stands today. It has withstood other earthquakes, civil war, and the wear and tear of life.

Jesus is central in the analogy Paul used regarding God's dwelling, the pillar and foundation of the truth. John 14 clearly conveys that truth is a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. He is the truth, the master builder, the pillar that proclaims the truth of salvation, the firm foundation, the solid rock that will withstand any storm, and the cornerstone that holds it all together. There is both a mystery and a beauty that Christ would become one with His Church and graft us into being part of the dwelling place of God where the foundation that we firmly rest on is Jesus. As pillars, we proclaim the message of truth with His words written on our hearts to those around us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask that the Lord will reveal to you how the truth of Jesus is upholding your life through various seasons.
2. As a pillar, is the message of Jesus, the truth, being proclaimed to those around you? Ask the Lord to reveal areas of your life where you might be able to reflect and exude more of Him.
3. Ask Jesus to make the truth fresh and beautiful in your heart if it has become dry and stale.