

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

YOUTH DEVOTIONAL



THE ALLIANCE



ALLIANCE YOUTH

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

INTRO

Dear Alliance family,

Welcome to 40 Days of Prayer! This prayer guide features daily devotionals and prayer prompts that are designed to lead you into the presence of God, to cry out to Him in prayer, and to listen for His still, small voice. It's not enough to hear about prayer, read about it, or even just learn about it. During these 40 days at the beginning of 2022, we need to engage in prayer—to perhaps do so with a frequency, fervency, and focus that is not normal for us. This year's theme is **Reawakening to Christ**. The aim of this 40-day focus is to fix our gaze on Jesus: remember who He is, what He has done, what He has given us to do, and what He will do in the future.

Look around at all that is happening in our nation and world. It is time to pray and to surrender to Jesus! Could it be that this 40 Days of Prayer could change us, change our prayer lives, change The Alliance, and even transform our nation and world? Let's step into this prayer experience with the anticipation that we will encounter the living God and fix our eyes upon Him. Let's pray with a spirit of expectancy that the Spirit of God will do great things in, among, and through us to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Keep the faith!



Terry D. Smith
Vice President for Church Ministries



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WEEK 1

REAWAKENING TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST

During His Incarnation, the glory of Christ is often veiled, and we see His humility. But His glory has existed from eternity past and will continue into eternity future. Even during His Incarnation, His glory is seen from time to time. This week's devotionals unpack various aspects of the glory of Christ so that we will find ourselves caught up in worship.

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THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST

JOHN 1:1-4, 14

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus didn't just come into existence when He was born? He existed from the very beginning, and He has continued to exist even after His physical death—Jesus is eternal!

If you've ever played peek-a-boo with a young child, you've witnessed a developmental theory at work called object permanence. This is the ability to know that an object still exists even if it cannot be seen. Infants who haven't yet developed object permanence will become upset when an object is hidden from sight because they think the item has vanished.

In the same way, if we are not developed enough in our faith to know that Christ is eternal, we can become upset when bad things happen in life because we think that He's vanished, that He's left us. But Christ is eternal, and it is a glorious promise to know that He has always been there and He will always be there with us. We can rest and confidently live life knowing that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). He is worthy of all our affection!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask Jesus to show you moments where He's been beside you in the past and the present. Does Jesus' presence change anything? Spend time praising Him for this revelation!
2. Have Jesus show you where He desires to be beside you in the future. Does His presence change anything? How? Journal your thoughts, and date the page. Commit these moments to Him so you can look back on it later.
3. Find a way to declare/express Isaiah 9:6—through calligraphy, art, writing poems or songs, declaring truth, dancing, journaling, etc.

» by Abi Arkawa

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2:8-9

Pray before you read: *Holy Spirit, help me understand Your Word. May this time together be glorifying to You—draw me closer to You. May I see Your work in this passage and in the day ahead of me.*

I have often wondered when the grumpy, old people in my church started being grumpy. What started them down the grumpy path? Why would they get so upset about a new song on Sunday morning? Then, one Sunday, the Holy Spirit convicted me. We were singing “Reckless Love” again, and I couldn’t do it. I mean, come on. How many times are we going to sing this song? I heard the Spirit say to me, “You’re not the one they’re worshiping.”

Oof, it’s true. I had lost the purpose of why we worship. I became a grumpy, old person caught up in the belief that I was the point and that my enjoyment of worship was the purpose. Verse 8 warns us of being taken captive like this by tradition rather than Christ.

Is there a tradition in your life that may have started out as something good but lost the purpose of bringing Christ the glory? It could be the reason you go to youth group, read your Bible, or the way you treat your friends.

Verse 9 talks about Jesus, in full deity, taking bodily form. The all-powerful being who created life with a breath bound Himself to the squishy human body—a body that is easily changed and damaged but also a body that couldn’t stop Him from miraculously healing the blind, the bleeding, and the dead or bearing the weight and pain of the cross.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank Jesus for being worthy of all your glory, honor, and praise.
2. Ask God to show you more of His goodness.
3. Pray that He will reveal to you more of how you can better worship Him and Him alone.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 4:14-16

For this devotional, begin outside. Look around at the environment that surrounds you.

In the Old Testament, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year to burn incense and sprinkle animal blood to atone for his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. The high priests in the Old Testament sacrificed but could not fulfill nor provide the sacrifice all mankind needed.

Jesus—God in the flesh—walked, lived, worshiped, wrestled, and overcame the issues of this life while being with people. Jesus was familiar with temptation and the struggles of man. In His life, He did not sin. He was, is, and forever will be the great High Priest, the ultimate sacrifice to atone for our sins.

You may be wondering, “What does this have to do with me? I am not God. I cannot live a sinless life.” What you do have is Christ living inside you.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. What do you believe about God? Pray that He will reveal to you the truths from His Word you can hold firm to.
2. How do you make it through the temptations and struggles of this world? Ask the Lord to help you seek after Him before all else.
3. What do you do when you fail or don't feel good enough? Pray that the Lord will show you His goodness and grace and help you trust in His promises and His love for you.

» by Joe Oliver

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

MATTHEW 17:1-8

Have you ever gone on a long hike with friends or family? There's just something special about being in nature away from our sometimes- hectic everyday lives. This passage starts off with Jesus and a couple of the disciples doing just that—hiking up a mountain.

This seemed to be a normal hike for Peter, James, and John, an opportunity to relax and spend some quality time with Jesus. But within minutes of finally reaching the top of the mountain, some crazy things happened. Jesus' face shone like the sun, Moses and Elijah appeared, the voice of God spoke to them from a cloud, and the disciples fell on their faces in fear.

By the time it was all over, the disciples were left with a new understanding of Jesus. They were able to see just a glimpse of His glory and were given a command: "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him."

Much like the disciples, sometimes we need a reminder to listen to Jesus. It can be easy for us to focus on what we want rather than what Jesus is saying. It can be easy for us to turn our relationship with Jesus into a one-way street where we make requests but don't listen to what He has to say. Today, set aside intentional time during prayer to listen to what God has for you.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Think about a time when you have seen God move. Praise Him for the ways He's worked in your life in the past.
2. Pray that God will give you a deeper understanding of His glory today.
3. Find a quiet place away from distractions. Put your phone on airplane mode. Set a timer for eight minutes and put it facedown or across the room from you. Pray that God will speak to you, and then listen to Him until your timer goes off. Keep a notebook and pen handy to write down what He says.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

ACTS 1:9-11

Have you ever encountered something difficult that left you saying, “I don’t get it. Why is this happening?” Often, it’s hard to grasp what God is up to when things happen that leave us wounded or when life is overwhelming and we can’t help but feel anxious.

Jesus’ closest friends spent years with Him—walked with Him, heard Him teach, watched in awe as He performed miracle after miracle. Think about the fun you have with your best friends. That’s what the disciples had with Jesus. And then Jesus told them He was going to die.

Jesus died to pay for the sins of the world and defeated Satan and darkness forever. His friends and followers didn’t understand, and they were devastated. But Jesus didn’t stay dead. Conquering death, Jesus came back to life! He returned! And then He told them He had to leave again. The disciples watched as Jesus disappeared into the sky.

“Why is He leaving? He *just* came back,” they must have thought.

Little did they know, this was a launching pad for the explosion of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus had told them it was better for Him to leave so that “the Helper” could come. Ten days later, the Holy Spirit came in their midst and filled them.

Even today, we receive the Holy Spirit when we come to faith in Jesus (see Acts 2:38). Jesus physically left the earth, but now inhabits His people by His Spirit.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. The glory of Christ is displayed in His power, His love for us, and His goodness even when we don’t understand what He is doing. Ask God to reveal Himself to you in new ways today.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you place your trust in Him.
3. Ask that the Lord will help you place all of your hope in Him and nothing else.

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN GLORY

MATTHEW 24:30-31

If you're like me, you read the passage and thought, "This is a little scary." I mean, the passage says that "there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth." Does it really mean *all* people?

The mourning described in the passage is for people who have rebelled against and rejected a relationship with Jesus. However, for those who know Him and are in relationship with Him, this is the moment our souls have been longing for—the time where Jesus finally comes back to earth to gather His children and bring us home. This passage of Scripture is one of hope in the power of Jesus and His love for us. It's something to look forward to, a time of eternal rest with our Father.

I can't help but be reminded of vacation and the hopeful excitement I feel as I await its arrival. Oftentimes, when my wife and I have a summer vacation scheduled out, and it's been a hard winter at work in Pennsylvania, my heart smiles knowing that a restful time in Florida is right around the corner. Like the return of Jesus, I have not experienced it yet, but the hope of vacation provides rest for me even before it happens. It's a hope not only for the future but for my present life.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what resting with Him looks like.
2. Pray that He will give you a better idea of what it means to find your rest in Him.
3. Ask God to help you rest in His love today and build hope for His coming tomorrow.

» by Devonte Thorne

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Exaltation is the action of elevating someone in rank, power, or character. It is a feeling or state of extreme happiness.

Exaltation of anything brings excitement. Think of a time when you or someone you know was given an award. They stood up on a stage or platform and were handed a certificate or medal or gift to honor their work, their character, or their strength—what a great feeling. The crowd went wild and cheered, joining in the celebration.

Jesus' exaltation was even more glorious than that except it occurred only in the unseen world of heaven. To the human eye, His "exaltation" was anything but—it was dirty, bloody, tiresome, lonely, and discouraging. The emotions He had when He humbled Himself in obedience were nothing celebratory or exciting. The time for His exaltation was moments away in heaven.

Can you think of a time when you did something wonderful, but nobody saw? For Jesus, heaven saw. Serving others is the sum of what Jesus dedicated His life to on earth. He came to serve—He served meals, healing, and forgiveness for all. How can you humble yourself to that of a servant today?



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that the Lord will give you a posture of gratitude for showing you His goodness.
2. Pray for strength to follow in the service of Jesus.
3. Pray for others to experience the deep love of God.

» by Annie Banceu

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WEEK 2

REAWAKENING TO THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

This week, we will focus on various aspects of Christ's Incarnation—from birth to death and Resurrection. We will turn our eyes to focus on the person of Jesus in all of His glory and continuously pray for deeper understanding of who He is.

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THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

LUKE 2:1-20

Having meditated on the eternal glory of Christ, the Incarnation of Christ can seem a bit confusing and even underwhelming. Why did the Creator of the universe choose to come to earth as a baby? What is it about the birth of Christ that prompted the angels to sing, the shepherds to go and tell, and Mary to treasure and ponder? The story of Jesus' birth told year after year can be easily rehearsed and, therefore, is constantly in danger of missing how the birth of Christ reveals to us the nature of the invisible God.

Jesus was born as an infant—vulnerable and in need of caring parents to wrap Him tight, feed Him, and give Him a place to lay His head. The One from whom all things were made came in the humble form of an infant.

Mary had a special connection to Jesus. Their lives were intimately connected in a beautiful way. Mary, as a mother, pondered and treasured this relationship that she had with the infant Jesus. And though she was the mother to Jesus, she knew that this baby was the One who came to take care of her deepest spiritual and eternal needs.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Take the next few minutes and pause to consider how Jesus humbly came in the flesh so that He would be united with you personally. Ask yourself the question, "Do I believe that Jesus wants to be intimately connected to me?"
2. Spend time, like the angels did, praising God for being pleased to send Jesus to offer us a personal relationship with Him.
3. Ask the Lord to reveal to you one person you can joyfully share the wonderful news of Jesus with.

» by Ryan Sullivan

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

LUKE 4:1-13

Have you ever eaten just one potato chip? It's incredibly hard. For most of us, after the first chip goes the second, and before you know it, the whole bag is finished! Temptations—whether big or small—are challenging to overcome, especially when they look appealing and when we feel alone in the challenge.

Jesus understands our dilemma. In Luke 4:1–13, we read about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness during forty days of fasting.

After days of fasting, you know the craving was real for Jesus! Yet, Jesus was able to overcome the temptations of the devil because He had two powerful weapons with Him. First, in verse 1, we find that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not alone because He had the power of the Holy Spirit within Him. Second, Jesus knew Scripture, which enabled Him to combat the devil at every turn.

If we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, which means we have the same power living in us to help us overcome temptation. Memorizing Scripture and spending time reading the Word of God helps us to fight back any temptation we may face. Even when we give into temptation, when we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9).



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Think about areas of your life where you face temptations. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you might be facing temptation now.
2. If you have given into temptation, take a moment to confess your sins to God.
3. Ask the Lord to help you trust that He loves you and is faithful to forgive.

» by Alison Ibanez

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

MARK 1:35-39

Let's imagine that it's early Saturday morning, still dark. You're completely exhausted from being out way too late the night before with friends after a football game. As you lay there half asleep, you suddenly remember that today is the day. Your childhood best friend is back in town! You've missed them so much since their dad had to take a job several states away two years ago. After weeks of planning, you both have convinced your parents to let them tag along on one of their dad's business trips so you could meet up.

The problem is the only time you can meet is early this morning. You're completely exhausted, but it doesn't really matter. You jump out of bed, quickly get ready, and head out to meet them for breakfast. A few hours only feel like a couple minutes, but it's so nice just to spend time talking and catching up. Soon it's time to go, but you are desperately looking forward to the next time that you can talk together.

In this passage, we get a glimpse into the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus loved spending time with His Father. Even though He was probably always physically exhausted from helping people, He found time to sneak away and pray. His personal comfort was secondary to a deep longing to connect with God alone.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Do you want the same love for prayer that Jesus had? If so, ask God for it right now.
2. Jesus understands feeling pressure from others, but He didn't let that distract Him from praying and keeping focused on His calling. List some things that distract you from your prayer time. Offer these things to God and ask Him to help you focus.
3. Jesus went to a solitary place to pray. Find a spot where you can pray daily without distraction. Practice praying there this week.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

MATTHEW 9:9-10

As a tax collector, Matthew would have been among the most reviled people in town. As a Jew who collected taxes from other Jews, he was surely loathed by his own people. He was also not exactly loved or respected by the Romans—he was still a Jew after all. The money was awfully good though.

Once he had collected enough taxes for Rome, anything extra he could squeeze out of the people was his to keep. Tax collecting made for a good living but, as it turns out, not for a very good social life. Maybe this is why Matthew was willing to leave it behind and follow Jesus after hearing just two words: “Follow me.”

I wonder if you have ever felt like Matthew—caught between two worlds, never quite fitting in, wanting something this world has to offer so badly that you would trade in something sacred, only to realize it could never satisfy.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Take a moment to be still and ask God what you can leave behind so that you can better follow Jesus.
2. While you are at school or out in public today, put your phone down and look around. Pray for the people you see who may be feeling abandoned and disconnected like Matthew.
3. Pray that God will stir in their hearts a desire to follow Him—maybe they are waiting on an invitation from someone like you.

» by Duane Richards

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

LUKE 7:11-17

Have you ever felt invisible—like nobody sees you? I wonder if this is how the widow in today's story felt. Though she was surrounded by a large crowd of mourners as they carried her only son, now dead, on a stretcher through the town, nobody knew she was mourning far more than just him.

The memories of the same procession come flooding back, only it was her husband on the stretcher. The crowd would soon leave, and she would return home alone with no support or financial means. Her future would likely include begging for food at risk of being taken advantage of by robbers who knew she was weak. I bet she felt invisible.

But someone saw her—Jesus. He saw not only her outward appearance of sadness and grief, but He saw her heart and her story and “his heart broke.” His plea for her to stop crying may have seemed insensitive until His next statement was directed at the son: “Young man, I say to you, get up!” Can you imagine the shock and awe?

He sees you, too. In fact, He's always seen you. The very reason He came to earth was for you. Just like the dead son on the stretcher could do nothing to help himself, neither can you or I. We are dead in our sin and need His sacrifice on the cross and resurrecting power to pull us off the stretcher. Celebrate today that He sees you and has compassion on you. Roll off the stretcher and let others see the miracle of the life you've been given.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Spend time thanking Jesus that He sees you while you are still a sinner.
2. Have you felt invisible? What troubles do you need to give to Jesus today? Ask Him to reveal Himself to you.
3. As you ride the bus, walk into the cafeteria, or sit in class, ask Jesus to help you to see others as He sees them.

THE ATONING DEATH OF CHRIST

LUKE 23:44-46

Jesus is our atonement! Paul not only explains the human condition in Romans, but the Law's requirement. He wrote this with an understanding of the Old Testament's requirement for blood atonement. This sacrifice of Jesus—taking on our sin and dying in our place—brought about the atonement of our sins. There is a price to pay for sin, and the price was, and will always be, death.

In the Old Testament, this death was signified in the sacrifice of the prized lamb. Numbers 28:3–8 describes the atoning sacrifice that was required by God's Law. Christ was the perfect lamb. In a court of law, we are worthy of the death penalty. Yet Jesus, through His death, saved us from the guilty verdict by becoming our justifier. Jesus took my guilt so that I could be free and so that I could be made right with the Lord.

When Christ died, the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn, which means that we who believe can now have full access to the presence of God because He, the perfect lamb, took away our sins and made us pure. The fall took away our access to the presence; but Christ, through His death and Resurrection, restored our access!

God is here, and God is with us! He desires to heal our wounds, our bodies, and our souls. He loves us and cares for us. Even though He's seen the depths of our hearts, He loves us the same. His plan is to restore all things, to renew all things, and to destroy the evil one and all his works. This plan begins with our own renewal and restoration and the destruction of the evil within us.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Seek after His presence and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you so that you can continually live in the now readily accessible presence of the Father!
2. Ask the Lord to reveal any wounds that have been inflicted upon you. Pray for His healing touch.
3. Pray for the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in your life.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

LUKE 24:1-6

We saw in yesterday's reading that "darkness came over the whole land" when Jesus was crucified (Luke 23:44). In each of our personal beginnings, we lived in the dark—or may still live in the dark if we have not received Jesus—but God makes His light shine in our hearts (see 2 Corinthians 4:6). This is the way of our God; His light shines out of the darkest places.

God's ultimate act of overcoming the darkness was through the Resurrection of His Son, Jesus. There could never be a darker moment than when the Light of the world was slain. Yet, Jesus used the darkest moment in history to provide His followers with access to the very source of light—Himself. He promises that "Whoever follows [Him] will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). This applies to our lives on this earth and for the rest of eternity.

We don't need to fear death or anything else that the evil one tries to throw at us because Jesus has overcome. If God can speak light into existence and defeat the power of death, He can handle whatever darkness you may be facing in your life, and this is exactly what He promises to do for those who invite Him in. Jesus rose from the dead so that we might have this hope. So don't lose heart—Jesus has overcome!



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Begin your prayer time by reflecting on and thanking God for the hope that you have in Jesus because of His Resurrection.
2. Spend time in listening prayer by asking God to reveal moments in your life when He turned dark situations around for good.
3. Go for a prayer walk around your neighborhood or school, and pray for the light of Jesus to shine out of the darkness (be specific).

Bonus: Spend time in private worship using the song "Resurrecting" by Elevation Worship.