

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

DAY 36

Today's Scripture comes from **1 Corinthians 14**.

But if you are preaching God's Word, even though such preaching is mostly for believers, and an unsaved person or a new Christian comes in who does not understand about these things, all these sermons will convince him of the fact that he is a sinner, and his conscience will be pricked by everything he hears. As he listens, his secret thoughts will be laid bare, and he will fall down on his knees and worship God, declaring that God is really there among you. (1 Corinthians 14:24-25)

Today's devotional asks two important questions. Take a minute to think about how you would answer each of them.

WHO ARE SOME OF THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE OR ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MINISTRIES OF YOUR CHURCH THAT DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD?

Take a minute to think about each statement in connection to the Joshua Church

SOME CHURCHES ARE VERY "OUTWARD" TO VISITORS WHILE OTHERS HAVE A HARDER TIME APPROACHING STRANGERS.

FIRST AN UNBELIEVER DISCOVERS THE TRUTH ABOUT A SAVIOR, NEXT ACCEPTS JESUS, AND FINALLY SHOUTS, "GOD IS REALLY AMONG YOU!" HOW GREAT IF THIS COULD BE SAID ABOUT OUR CHURCH.

IN A HEALTHY CHURCH IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT GOD IS THE CENTER OF THE CHURCH.

PRAYER REQUEST

PRAY FOR GOD TO SHOW YOU HOW HE IS MOVING IN YOUR CHURCH. ASK GOD TO HELP YOU REFLECT HIS PRESENCE TO A LOST WORLD.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice! . . . Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus. And now, brothers, as I close this letter, let me say this one more thing: Fix your

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9 – LB)

When I praise God, it gives me a new promise! The result: joy & peace.

TODAY'S PASSAGE CHALLENGES US TO "THINK ABOUT ALL THE GOOD THINGS YOU CAN PRAISE GOD FOR AND BE GLAD ABOUT IT". PRAISE GOD FOR THE PEACE THAT GOD GIVES TO US.

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

DAY 37

Today's Scripture comes from **Matthew 28** commonly called "The Great Commission".

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20 – NLT)

A GREAT COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS AND GREAT COMMISSION WILL BUILD A GREAT CHURCH.

Today's devotional makes this powerful statement: ***"The Great Commission is not optional or suggestive in nature . . . The Great Commission is the mission mandate for every church – regardless of the church's structure, size or style"***.

Reaching the lost is at the heart of why our church exists. We are never to forget the reason why we are here – **TO HELP PEOPLE FIND JESUS!**

PRAYER REQUEST

Let's come together today and pray that God would:

1. Give us a deep burden for the lost around us
2. Help us to find creative ways to impact our community for Christ
3. Raise up an ARMY here at Joshua that will truly follow our Commander-in-Chief and follow His will.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Sing to the Lord, declare each day that He is the one who saves! Show his glory to the nations! Tell everyone about His miracles. For the Lord is great and should be highly praised; He is to be held in awe above all gods. Majesty and honor march before him, Strength and gladness walk beside Him. O people of all nations of the earth, Ascribe great strength and glory to His name! Yes, ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name! Bring an offering and come before Him; Worship the Lord when clothed with holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth! The world stands unmoved. Let the heavens be glad, the earth rejoice; Let all the nations say, 'It is the Lord who reigns.' Let the vast seas roar, Let the countryside and everything in it rejoice! Let the trees in the woods sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes to judge the earth. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love and His kindness go on forever. (1 Chronicles 16:23-35 – LB)

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

When I praise God, it gives me a new purpose!

The result: Lives Impacted!

Living a life of praise is not only the most enjoyable way to live, but it's also one of the most powerful ways to change your life. Praise isn't like the caboose that just follows what happens, but it's more like the engine of a train that makes things happen. Your faith isn't complete without praise. Praise is not the inevitable byproduct that comes when everything is going right in our lives; it is the driving force. Praise will get our focus where it needs to be—on God. If we start praising God in the middle of our problems, our problems will shrink so much that we'll hardly remember to bring them to God! We'll be so busy praising Him and thanking Him for His blessings that our problems will be an afterthought.

TODAY'S PRAISE PASSAGE REMINDS US THAT AS WE PRAISE GOD IT IMPACTS THE WORLD AROUND US. WE SHOULD PRAISE GOD EVERYDAY AND TELL OTHERS ABOUT HOW GOOD HE IS. OUR PRAISE POINTS PEOPLE TO THE REALITY OF GOD. TODAY'S PRAISE ASSIGNMENT: TELL SOMEBODY HOW GOOD GOD HAS BEEN TO YOU.

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

DAY 38

Today's Scripture comes from **Revelation 3** and records the words of Jesus to the church in the city of Laodicea.

Write this letter to the leader of the church in Laodicea: "This message is from the one who stands firm, the faithful and true Witness of all that is or was or evermore shall be, the primeval source of God's creation: "I know you well—you are neither hot nor cold; I wish you were one or the other! But since you are merely lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth! "You say, 'I am rich, with everything I want; I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that spiritually you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. "My advice to you is to buy pure gold from me, gold purified by fire—only then will you truly be rich. And to purchase from me white garments, clean and pure, so you won't be naked and ashamed; and to get medicine from me to heal your eyes and give you back your sight. (Revelation 3:14-18 – NLT)

Remember Goldilocks and the three bears – the porridge was too hot, too cold or (in the middle) JUST RIGHT. But Goldilocks had it all wrong. It turns out, being lukewarm is far from a good thing.

Cold is an extreme, and so is hot. If we take a shower on full heat we are bound to get reddened skin and a steamed up bathroom. If we only used the cold water, the shower would be extremely chilly.

Still confused about what Goldilocks and showers have to do with your life? **The key is the extremes.** If we claim to be Christians then we need to live like it, **all the way.** Don't live as a half Christ follower, half world follower. It doesn't work.

God didn't do things halfway, and then quit. Jesus didn't take his ministry halfway, and quit when it was at its most difficult stage.

Look to Jesus as a role model. Jesus taught us a great deal through His ministry. **Jesus also took the cross all the way.** It isn't about taking it as far as possible without leaving our comfort zone. It is about taking up our crosses, and persistently pressing forward.

What does this mean for us? Keep in mind that these words are for believers today. So, the question is, are you spiritually hot, cold, or lukewarm? Don't answer that too quickly, because the lukewarm person is often the last to know.

Why is being lukewarm such an issue? G. Campbell Morgan wrote *"There is more hope for the man outside the church in all his coldness than for the man within the church who is near enough its warmth to appreciate it and far enough from its burning heat to be useless to God*

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

and man. There is a greater chance for the nonbeliever who has NOT heard the gospel than the man who has become an evangelized nonbeliever.”

The fire of God is a fire of love, purity and power. We need His fire, every day of our lives. Let's make sure that we never settle for a lukewarm commitment.

PRAYER REQUEST

Father, forgive us that we are so busy with our own things and ignore You.

Father, forgive us that we do things our own way without being led by Your Spirit.

Father, forgive us that we so easily talk about You, but run the other way fast when You approach us with Your fire and love, power and passion. Forgive us, Lord.

Father, You are life. You are love. You are pure fire, real fire. Change us, Lord. Take our words away and give us FIRE. Take our intellect away, so to speak, and make us like children who live in You. Make us real, Lord. Burn through our pride and defenses with your consuming fire.

Make us real, Lord. Make us blaze with Your fire, Lord. Baptize us, Father, in the eternal fire of your love.”

PRAISE AND THANKS

God Calls Us to Worship

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

*For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

Praise the Lord! (Psalm 117)

There is a quiet reminder in the call to worship that worship is not our idea. We worship because it is God's idea. **Psalm 117** is God's word, which means it is God who is speaking to his people, commanding, inviting, and exhorting us to praise Him (**verse 1**). This call is rooted in a firm commitment to both His glory and our joy. When God's people are gathered in His name, He serves as the host. He has initiated and invited us into fellowship with Him.

The response in **Psalm 117** implies a recognition of who God is — of his worth (**verse 2**). In the call to worship we recognize and remember that it is God alone who is worthy to have our hearts, lips, and lives. As truth rings through our bones, we are reminded of the object of our worship. Worship, in the rhythm of revelation and praise, begins with God making Himself known, and is followed by our response of remembrance and praise.

Living a life of praise is not only the most enjoyable way to live, but it's also one of the most powerful ways to change your life. Praise isn't like the caboose that just follows what happens, but it's more like the engine of a train that makes things happen. Your faith isn't complete without praise. Praise is not the inevitable byproduct that comes when everything is going right in our lives; it is the driving force. Praise will get our focus where it needs to be—on God. If we start praising God in the middle of our problems, our problems will shrink so much that we'll

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

hardly remember to bring them to God! We'll be so busy praising Him and thanking Him for His blessings that our problems will be an afterthought.

TODAY'S PRAISE ASSIGNMENT: Praise God for His steadfast love and His ongoing faithfulness to us.

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

DAY 39

Today's Scripture again comes from **Revelation 3** and records the words of Jesus to the church in the city of Sardis.

“To the leader of the church in Sardis write this letter: “This message is sent to you by the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars. “I know your reputation as a live and active church, but you are dead. Now wake up! Strengthen what little remains—for even what is left is at the point of death. Your deeds are far from right in the sight of God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again. Unless you do, I will come suddenly upon you, unexpected as a thief, and punish you. “Yet even there in Sardis some haven’t soiled their garments with the world’s filth; they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. Everyone who conquers will be clothed in white, and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that he is mine. “Let all who can hear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. (Revelation 3:1-6 – NLT)

Hollywood has given us a name for people like Jesus describes in this passage: it calls them “Zombies” — corpses that are alive, that walk about as though they are living but they are really dead. As we read this letter, we are looking at the First Zombie Church of Sardis!

There are zombie churches among us—churches where genuine life has been lost and in its place, is something scary and lifeless. The zombies in the movies are moving corpses that imitate life. Known as the living dead, zombies act like they are alive, but they are not. While zombie churches might not look any different from healthy churches, they are missing one key ingredient: life.

Jesus is the source of life. When we are disconnected from Jesus and what He is doing in the world around us we become disconnected from life. Just because a church loses its connection with Christ doesn't mean it closes its doors.

Think of zombie churches as churches that have been infected. They are contagious. Instead of offering people a real, transforming relationship with the Creator of the universe, they offer hollow rituals and pointless routines. The motions seem right, but something is missing. Zombie churches have become infected with unbiblical mindsets, traditions, rules, and rituals. When such things become more important than the growth of God's kingdom, problems ensue. When the church is more about us than it should be, it's because we've removed Jesus from the center and placed ourselves there instead. When this happens among individuals we call it selfishness. When it happens corporately it becomes toxic.

Warning Signs

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

How does a living, vibrant church become a zombie church? It loses its focus on Jesus, the source of life. When this happens, several symptoms become apparent.

A zombie church worships idols. An idol is anything we treat as more important than God. As vital as Communion, baptism, service, prayer, and worship are, we cannot elevate any of these above God Himself. Thankfully, we don't have to. Living churches put God first while they promote sound doctrine. Zombie churches make doctrine an object of worship.

A zombie church lacks intimacy among its members. People in some churches are friendly, but they do not provide a true community that offers a safe place for believers to grow, learn, fall down, repent, and support each other.

A zombie church has an inward focus. It's important to take care of the church family. Members of Christ-centered communities support and encourage each other. The danger comes not when this happens, but when this is all that happens. Christians encourage and support one another not so we will feel better about ourselves, but so we will be better able to go into the world and show people the love of Jesus.

A zombie church focuses on human involvement rather than divine activity. It emphasizes works and personal effort rather than grace. Our salvation is not about what we do; it's about what Jesus has done for us.

The Cure

It all comes down to Jesus. Biblical interpretations, religious denominations, traditions, and human rules are hollow. They pretend to have life but in reality, have nothing to offer. Jesus gives life. He alone should be the focus of the church. When we make the church about anything other than Christ, it becomes dysfunctional. Our goal should not be to know the most Bible trivia; it should be to live like Jesus, to love like Jesus, and to look like Jesus in everything we do. The church is ever, only, always about Jesus. Healthy churches remember that, and live by it.

Jesus said this to Sardis, "*Now wake up! Strengthen what little remains.*" By saying this, Jesus affirms that He has not given up on them and that they still have great potential to make an impact. Even when things look bleak and even when all we see are the "negative" things, God still sees our churches potential.

ARE YOU ABLE TO IDENTIFY ONE OR MORE AREAS OF STRENGTH FOR YOUR CONGREGATION?

PRAYER REQUEST

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

Would you pray today that God would reveal to you and others in your church those areas where your congregation is strong. Ask God to help you build on that area of strength for His glory and for the good of the church and the community where God has placed you. Pray that our church would truly LOVE Jesus and become stronger than ever before.

PRAISE AND THANKS

We are called to live a lifestyle of worship!

There is power in worshipping God. If we want to see breakthroughs in our life and in the lives of others, then this is the time to enter deeper levels of worship both personally and corporately. It is only as we ascend to the throne room in worship that we can descend back into the harvest field here on earth, praying and warring for victory in every area of life. When you and I come boldly to God's throne in worship, He gives us His plans and strategies for our lives here on earth. There is no way that we can walk in His peace, power, and perfect plan without a lifestyle of worship. Worship changes our lives and how we see our circumstances. A lifestyle of worship is the key to life.

We are entering turbulent waters, and we must lay hold of this reality so that each one of us may stand firm, hold steady, and pray fervently as the days unfold before us. There is no storm that Jesus will not be able to conquer. If we worship Him during resistance, we shall see His victory. He can break through any obstacle when we make worship our lifestyle. The Psalms are filled with worship. **Psalm 96:1-3** is a good example: *“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”*

TODAY'S PRAISE ASSIGNMENT: Think of some specific ways you can “declare His glory” to the people around you. How can you let others know of “His marvelous deeds”?

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

DAY 40

Today's Scripture again comes from **Revelation 3** about the words of Jesus to the church in the city of Sardis.

“To the leader of the church in Sardis write this letter: “This message is sent to you by the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars. “I know your reputation as a live and active church, but you are dead. Now wake up! Strengthen what little remains—for even what is left is at the point of death. Your deeds are far from right in the sight of God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again. Unless you do, I will come suddenly upon you, unexpected as a thief, and punish you. “Yet even there in Sardis some haven’t soiled their garments with the world’s filth; they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. Everyone who conquers will be clothed in white, and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that he is mine. “Let all who can hear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. (Revelation 3:1-6 – NLT)

Jesus said this to Sardis, *“I know your reputation . . . “*. By saying this, our Lord underscores the fact that He knows everything about us (as individuals) and about our church.

The most important question a person or a church can ever ask is this: **“WHAT DOES JESUS REALLY THINK ABOUT US?”**

In a recent article, church growth expert Aubrey Malphurs writes:

Far too many churches have offered up ministry mediocrity under the guise of “it’s a spiritual undertaking for God.” Scripture encourages God’s people to give and do their best for him. Israel was to bring their best animals for sacrifice (Lev. 22:20–22; Num. 18:29–30). When they did not bring the best, it was an indication that their hearts had wandered from God (Mal. 1:6–8). In Ephesians 6:5–8 and Colossians 3:23–24, Paul teaches that God expects us to give only our best in our work. We are to do our work as if we are working for God. When Jesus turned the water into wine at Cana, it was the best, not mediocre, wine (John 2:10). If God gave his best for us when he gave his Son, (John 3:16), how can we not give our best for him?

ARE YOU ABLE TO IDENTIFY ONE OR MORE AREAS OF STRENGTH FOR YOUR CONGREGATION?

PRAYER REQUEST

Our final prayer is that our church would be everything that God has called it to be. Pray that we would fulfill His purposes. Pray for our continued growth and health. Pray that we would truly impact our community. Pray for our Pastor, our staff, our volunteers. Pray that we would have the financial resources we need to carry out our ministry. Pray for everyone at Joshua to grow in their faith and become all that God wants them to be.

40 DAYS of PRAYER

Week Six

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praising and worshipping Jesus is an incredible privilege and we should be excited about it every day!

Webster's says *exciting* means "causing great enthusiasm and eagerness." Certainly, nothing should cause greater enthusiasm and eagerness than meeting with the church to recount what God has done to save us from His wrath through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. All our sins are forgiven! We have been adopted into God's family! Jesus has triumphed over sin, death, and hell! We are new creations! We are part of God's unstoppable, unchangeable, unrelenting plan to have a people on earth who will display His glory, truth, righteousness, love, and compassion! What can be more earth-shattering, soul-shaking, and EXCITING than rehearsing and reveling in those realities? We're remembering and celebrating the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, has clothed Himself in our flesh, received God's wrath in our place, risen from the dead, and is now reigning and interceding for His own until He returns to vanquish evil and spend eternity with His Bride, the Church. And no matter how many times we're reminded, *that* is exciting.

TODAY'S PRAISE ASSIGNMENT: Think of how wonderful God's amazing grace has been in your life. Praise Him for loving you, dying for you, saving you and living inside of you.

DAY 41

Now what?

KEEP GOING AND KEEP GROWING!!