

40 DAYS OF *prayer*



THE ALLIANCE

INTRO

Dear Alliance Family,

Happy New Year and welcome to 40 Days of Prayer 2024! Our theme this year is *now. pray.* This is appropriate since, as The Christian and Missionary Alliance, we are engaged in the **now.** strategy. As we'll see, *now* is a word and concept that appears in Scripture. The word *now* can communicate our current reality—what we are now. It can also communicate a sense of urgency—what we need to do now. We'll see both of these aspects of the word *now* surface during these days of focused prayer.

Week 1 will focus our ears and minds on an urgent spiritual wake-up call. In week 2, we'll be invited into a call to urgent intercession. Week 3 will remind us that in this current reality, we belong to the Lord. In week 4, we'll see that now is the time to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth. In week 5, we'll celebrate the reality that we are all part of the same Body, all part of the family of God. And finally, week 6 will remind us of the urgency of evangelism.

Along the way, please pray for the Spirit-enabled fulfillment of the five goals that are part of the **now.** strategy:

- SEND one new international worker per week.
- OPEN one new open door for Alliance missions advance per year.
- PLANT one new U.S. church plant per week.
- BUILD one Alliance Place by 2025.
- RAISE one hundred million dollars per year (combined support need for the Great Commission Fund and Project ReImagine).

Some of you who have been in this Alliance family for a long time will remember an old chorus written by Dwight Hall that was used as our Missions Conference theme song in the early 1980s. Appropriate to our **now.** theme, this song says, "Lord, in this urgent hour, we long to see Thy pow'r; send forth a mighty show'r of holy love. Millions are lost from Thee, great God of majesty. Oh, Savior, set them free, great God of love." So, let's pray with a sense of urgency and pray that, above all else, we will see all kinds of people across this nation and around the world come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Keep the faith!



Terry D. Smith
Vice President for Church Ministries



THEALLIANCE

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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.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 2

PRAY NOW

Luke 18:1

Always includes *now*. Jesus' prescription for whatever we're facing right now is prayer. There should always be this sense of urgency within us to seek the Father for His help, direction, and power. James echoes this when he writes, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray" (James 5:13a). Prayer should be our first reaction, not our last resort. That is part of what the Lord wants to teach us as we begin another year in prayer as the Alliance family. In the face of challenging circumstances, we're all apt to shift immediately into problem-solving mode, trying to bring our resources to bear on the issue, only to find ourselves overmatched. As we ask the Lord instead, we turn our attention and faith to the unlimited resources of our Almighty God. "Lord, teach us to pray!"

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PRAYING FOR IMPORTANT DECISIONS

LUKE 6:12-16

I learned many lessons from my maternal grandmother. I used to sleep over at her house on weekends and remember falling asleep in her room while she, on her knees by the bed, would pray to God for hours. She interceded for her family, herself, and her church. And in times of difficult decisions, in tears, she prayed to her Creator. In the morning, I'd find her in the same place and position praying. She lived a Spirit-led life that showed her devotion to God through fervent prayer. She followed her loving Savior's example.

Jesus' prayer life is constant throughout the gospels. In this passage, we read that after praying all night, He chose the men who would carry on His message after He had ascended to the heavens. This was a critical decision, and He prayed before He chose. Jesus was a man of prayer who depended solely on the guidance of His Father. He needed this time away to pray. He knew the need to seek direction and discernment from His Father.

We all have moments where we must make decisions that could potentially change the direction of our lives. Unfortunately, we don't always understand the need to pause to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to seek guidance from our Father. We must not get ahead of ourselves without first having submitted to the Holy Spirit and persisted in fervent prayer. We need to follow Jesus' example. That's what my grandmother did!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I long to follow Your example. Holy Spirit, lead me in times when I must make important or hard decisions. Stir in me a deep yearning and sense of urgency to seek Your guidance as I discern Your plans for my life. May I be reminded to completely rest in Your will and surrender my time to truly seek You in fervent prayer. In Your precious, loving name, amen.

PRAYING FOR WORKERS IN THE HARVEST FIELD MATTHEW 9:37-38

Whenever I spend time with an international worker, I hear the same question: “Michelle, who do you know that can come serve with us?”

As Christ followers, each of us is called to be a witness of Christ to people we encounter. Regardless of our location, the call is the same—to be His witnesses, telling people everywhere about Him (Acts 1:8). And yet, nearly half of the world’s population has yet to hear Jesus’ name or encounter a Christian and has no access to the gospel, no ability for someone to pray with them in Jesus’ name, no understanding of the extraordinarily extravagant love, grace, and forgiveness of God shared by someone they meet.

In Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus tells His disciples, “Ask the Lord of the harvest . . . to send out workers.” In verse 36, we see His motivation: “He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

His compassion prompted Him to direct His disciples to pray for workers. How do we compassionately reach the world for Christ? We pray for more international workers. God leads people to leave behind their current life to embrace a new country to call home, a new culture to adapt to, a new language to learn, and new people to share Christ with. My Acts 1:8 family, our international workers need teammates. Would you pray for the Lord to send new workers, and would you ask Him if He is sending you?



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, give us deep compassion for the lost. We know the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. God, send more workers. Now. Prompt people today to take a step of faith to tell someone they’re hearing Your voice telling them to bring the gospel to another part of the world. Bury deep in their soul a confidence that they will have a new global address and that by the power of Holy Spirit, they will be part of a great harvest for the Kingdom. And Jesus, are You asking me to go? Allow me to listen to You. Amen.

PRAYING FOR HEALING

JAMES 5:14-16

Jesus hurts when you hurt. Jesus feels the weight of your sorrows. He sees you when pain and woundedness becomes the lining of your spirit, when it takes hold like moss on a rock. He is there when you receive hard news, the kind that results in years of uncertainty, the kind that straddles hope and fear. Jesus stoops down when your choices have left you broken and desperate and full of guilt and shame. He is with you always and beckons you to come to Him, the Healer.

Jesus speaks, and storms lose their power. With His touch, fevers disappear and bleeding stops. Jesus shouts, and the dead are raised to life. As He speaks truth in love, kindness, and compassion, troubled souls are set free and broken hearts are mended. When asked in faith, Jesus brings healing. He delivers from the entanglements of the enemy's schemes. His authority breaks all chains of lies and sin. Jesus longs for all things to become new—when pain, sickness, sin, and sorrows are no longer a part of your story.

When wounds are deep, remember who holds the truth of who you are. When fear of the unknown threatens to consume you, remember who spoke the planets into being yet holds you in His hand. When your struggles with sin intimidate and torment you, reach for the nail-scarred hands that already set you free. Cry out in prayer to Jesus, where your healing and deliverance awaits.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord Jesus, loving, kind, compassionate Healer and Deliverer of our souls, thank You. Thank You for healing and restoring us, setting us free, and making us whole. Thank You for empowering us to be a part of the Kingdom work of healing and delivering through the authority You gave us as Spirit-filled disciples. Clothed in Your love and goodness, may we be quick to come with faithful prayer to the aid of all those who are in pain, wounded, sick, suffering, bound in sin, and needing deliverance. May You receive all the glory and honor for restored lives. Amen.

PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE

MARK 9:14-29

Trouble, danger, distress, and fear. In this passage, God's people are under the most serious of threats as their enemies, vast in number, intend for their utter destruction. The king is rightfully afraid, but rather than give into despair, he turns to the Lord. What follows is a testimony to the fruit of faith over fear, a picture of trusting in God despite circumstance.

The king gathers all of Judah—men, women, boys, and girls—and turns to the Lord in prayer. He begins by acknowledging the sovereign power of Yahweh, praising Him for His provision, confessing that He hears and will save, calls on His justice, and ends with one of the most tender expressions of trust in all of Scripture: “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron. 20:12).

Reading beyond the assigned passage, we see the Lord's response to the prayer of faith (2 Chron. 20:15–17). He has indeed heard their prayers and responds, encouraging His people to not be afraid. The grounds? The battle is not theirs but His. And further, He promises His presence. What follows is one of the more amazing stories of God's sovereign power and care for His people that the Bible has to offer.

Trouble, danger, distress, and fear? Don't know what to do? Fix your eyes on Jesus. The battles are real, but ultimately as His child, they are His, and He promises His presence. May the Lord encourage you to turn to Him in faith-filled prayer!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord God, I come in the name of Your Son, to whom belongs all authority on heaven and on earth, who sits at Your right hand, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion and above every name that is named—not only in this age but in the age to come. I praise You and give You thanks for the gift of the presence of Your Spirit. Lord God, would You, in Your kindness, remind me this day that Your power is made perfect in my weakness. Help me, Lord, to keep my eyes on Jesus! Amen.

PRAYING FOR EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITIES COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

“Devote yourself.” That’s language we don’t hear too often. To be devoted speaks of dedication and an unswerving commitment. Today’s passage begins with the instruction that our prayer life, and any fruit that flows from these prayers, begins with devotion.

What should we pray for? We should pray for an open door for our message, clear proclamation, wisdom, and that opportunities are not missed. How do we do this? We do so graciously, seasoned in a way that adds flavor (not irritation), and that provides insights to life’s many questions.

It sounds simple, right? At this point, some people will tell you it’s not, that the people don’t want to hear our message, that culture has changed and is hostile to the church.

Jesus disagrees. He told His clumsy followers, who had a record of getting it wrong, that the fields are ripe for the harvest; the problem was that the laborers were few, unconvinced, or simply unwilling.

Today, our prayer is that we are not counted among the few, the unconvinced, and the unwilling. In contrast to many of our prayers, we have a significant part to play in answering this prayer. How? By being willing.

Will you, like Jesus, look for open doors? Will you knock on these doors often—aware that in ourselves, we cannot save anyone? Jesus loves to come in and eat with everyone who invites Him in.

The Holy Spirit prompts the hearts of the hearers. May our feet walk in tune with His leading.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, may we make the most of every opportunity, in grace, through our words and our actions. Would You help us believe with confidence in the good news, and may we be devoted to this cause. We love You. Amen.

PRAYING FOR SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

EPHESIANS 1:17

Prayer, like other spiritual disciplines, is meant to lead us into intimacy with God. Prayer is spending life with God, a conversation with the Lover of our souls. It includes what is dear to our heart and what is dear to Him. If our approach to prayer is like a vending machine, getting answers for payment, we will not comprehend the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 1:17.

Inspired by the Spirit, the best thing Paul could pray for the Church was that they would be given the wisdom and insight to know God intimately. Scripture tells us that God desires to give us good gifts in the context of relationship. He is all-knowing and all-wise; wisdom and insight are His to give. Consider the opposite—the teachers of the Law in Jesus' time knew the Law, but they did not know the Father. Therefore, they lacked insight into what the Law meant for people's lives. Do you desire spiritual insight and wisdom? Good. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." James 1:5 tells us that God desires to give us wisdom. Get to know your Lord who desires for you to know Him intimately. Ask Him, and you will have what you need.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we want to know You more and more each day.

Holy Spirit, please give us the spiritual insight and wisdom to navigate this complex world. I want to see what You see and have Your heart for the people I encounter and situations I face.

Jesus, You made all this possible. Teach us how to live in this world as You did.

May it all be for the glory of God! Amen.

PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE

MARK 9:14-29

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you felt powerless to make something happen yet were unsure of the reason why? Today, in our passage of Scripture, we find the disciples confused. They had been following Jesus for some time and had seen God use them to set people free. Yet in today's story, they were powerless to cast out demons. Once Jesus set the boy free, the disciples privately asked Jesus why they were powerless. He tells them, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29).

Jesus is making a connection between our spiritual authority and prayer. He is telling His disciples that a consistent life of prayer is necessary. Did you notice that Jesus didn't stop and pray before He cast out the demon? But He did pray consistently; His life was marked by prayer. Over and over in Scripture we read of Jesus going away to pray. The prayer that Jesus is talking about is not when you find yourself in a position of need but before you have the need. It's a prayer that builds your faith muscles and produces greater intimacy with Jesus.

Remember that our positional authority comes from our position as children of God who are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm, but our practical authority comes through prayer. When we fast and pray, our dependence transfers from one of depending on our own abilities to depending on the all-sustaining power and presence of Jesus.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, we come to You desperate to know You and to become more like You. Would You teach us how to live a life of consistent prayer? May we be known as people who regularly get away to be with our Father, so much so that we carry the aroma of Christ. And when people see us, let them see You. Help us to carry Your presence well as we walk with You through our daily lives, loving and serving those You put before us. In Jesus' name, amen.

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WEEK 3 HIS NOW

John 15:16

God created us to be His possession and for His glory. However, sin separated us from the holy God, and all of us fall short of His glory. But through God's grace, we have been justified freely through the redemption that came through Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus did on the Cross, we are now reconciled with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. As joint heirs with Christ, we share the "glory of Christ," which God the Father gave to Jesus. Hence, we are now His! We are His chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, special possessions, sheep, messengers, and masterpieces.

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HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

JOHN 15:16

Frodo: "I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened."

Gandalf: "So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world, Frodo, besides that of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, in which case you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought."

—J. R. R. Tolkien

This work of fiction by Tolkien illustrates the reality that Jesus explains in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

We were meant to be His people. We are appointed to bear fruit. He is the One we belong to, and He is orchestrating the sequence and events of our lives so that our lives produce eternal results (fruit that lasts). You are His, and He has given you the time you have to impact eternity. That is an encouraging thought.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we are privileged to belong to You. You are the source of any fruit that our lives produce. When we look more like Your Son than the day before, this is Your work in us. When we impact other believers with love, encouragement, or equipping, You are the source of that fruit. When we give gospel access to the lost and they respond to the truth, You are the one appointing that relationship. May we be led by Your Spirit daily so that all our resources and all our relationships bring glory to the name of Jesus. Amen.

HIS ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

1 PETER 2:5

Do you feel unworthy, out of place, or not good enough? The truth is, we all have feelings and emotions that sometimes make us feel that we are unwanted or unloved. We think having a big title, a million friends, the perfect relationship, or a bunch of money will make us feel worthy and loved. But the sad truth is, none of these things will make us worthy. But don't worry. Because of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, He opened an entrance for every believer to be in the presence of the Father through their faith. Jesus made you worthy!

You have direct access into God's holy presence, and it's not because of who you are or what you have done. It is because God loves you and thinks of you as a member of His holy priesthood. You have been accepted in Christ through your faith. You are now His ambassador, entrusted with the gospel. And you can come boldly into His presence, offering sacrifices of praise. As you live here on earth, you represent another kingdom—God's Kingdom. You are a stone set aside for God's specific project. So, remember—always remember—you are not alone. You are worthy, and no matter what, you are always loved in the presence of God.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank You for choosing me and giving me direct access to Your holy presence. Thank You for making me worthy. I know I can do all things through You, and I know You have great plans for my life—plans to use me to advance Your Kingdom. I praise You, Lord. Thank You for Your love, Your mercy, Your forgiveness, and most of all, for Your Son, Jesus. Please continue to humble my heart to bring others into Your presence, telling everyone they are loved, not alone, and they, too, are worthy. I pray all of this in Your Son's name. Amen.

HIS HOLY NATION

DEUTERONOMY 26:19

Have you ever been the last one picked? Teams are being chosen, and one by one the people next to you get put on their respective sides. With each passing selection, the knot in your stomach expands. *Will I ever get chosen?* On the other hand, have you ever had the privilege of being the first one picked? When you hear your name called out before all the others, your chest swells with pride at the honor you are receiving.

Israel was God's pick. Out of all the nations on earth, God said, *You are the one I am going to use to be on my side and reveal to the world who I am and what I am about.* What an honor! What a privilege! As we fast-forward to the New Testament, in Jesus Christ we find out that we, as the Church, become the ones who are picked by God. We are now the consecrated people who God has chosen to reveal who He is to the world.

What is unique to being picked by God as part of His holy nation is that we are built not to hold on to our position as God's chosen with pride in our own status but to serve and bless every other person and people on earth. Like Israel, we are blessed so that we can be a blessing. Being part of this holy nation comes with the responsibility to bless others and serve out of self-sacrificial love.



REFLECTION PRAYER

God, we thank You that in Jesus, You have picked us and we are on Your team, a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Thank You for inviting us into loving relationship with You. We are so grateful. Help us not to be prideful in our position as Your people, but instead, with hearts full of gratitude, help us bless those around us who do not yet know You. Give us the strength to sacrifice out of the richness of Your blessings in our lives to serve those who are still far from You. Amen.

HIS SPECIAL POSSESSION

DEUTERONOMY 14:2

As an introvert, there are many times I am content to observe and not stand out. I'm happy with serving in the background and blending in. It can be mindless in the chaos; it can be comfortable when everything else seems so drastically changing and radical. It's sometimes even easier that way, especially in this present world when it seems like any opinion or stance you take is both criticized and up for ridicule.

But right now, the truth about God is so blurred. We have a desperate need for people to be different, to stand out. And although the idea of standing out is often not one of the attributes we love as Christians, especially for introverts, the world is rapidly pushing and trying to tell us to stay in its boundaries, to stay to the side.

This competitive, power-hungry world can make you feel like you've been set aside, rejected, and unwanted. But God has way better plans for each of us than that. He calls us to be set apart, which means to be given an assignment or special task, to be a special possession—His special possession. And there is something wonderfully comforting and powerful in the realization that He has personally chosen each one of us to represent Him here on the earth. So, may we stand bold in this truth and feel compelled to stand up and out for Christ, to show His love and mercy to all the world.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Lord, we are not here to be set aside; we hear Your call to be set apart. Help us to believe in this calling from You, and give us Your strength and wisdom in all our moments to stand out. Help us know that we cannot influence the world when we look just like it. Wrap us in Your holiness, grace, and love so we may remember to whom we fully belong and who we were meant to be. Thank You for always and forever choosing us. Amen.

HIS SHEEP

JOHN 10:27

For most of my life, I have been an incredibly self-confident person—not caring what others thought about me or needing anyone’s approval in my life. Then one day, my world was rocked by something that came seemingly out of nowhere. My confidence was shaken, and I found myself wanting assurance from those closest to me that I would be OK. This was new territory for me, and it was uncomfortable to say the least. I began questioning every move I made.

In one of the many moments on my knees before Jesus, I cried out, asking for help with the insecurity I was experiencing, and I felt him say, “I am your assurance. Your assurance is in me.” I was reminded that as close and reliant as we feel to those around us, the reality is that all we need is Jesus. Throughout Scripture, we see Jesus calling person after person to stop relying on every earthly thing they have—their job, family, title, money—and to just follow Him.

As I got up off my knees that day, I felt a strength and a peace—an assurance—that I knew could only come from Him. And though there have been many times I’ve had to go back to that word and remind myself that my assurance is in God, I’m thankful that He is faithfully there, ready to speak over me again and again.

Listen to His voice. He knows you. Follow Him.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Precious Father, You are our Good Shepherd. You know Your sheep, and Your sheep know Your voice. Thank You for Your faithfulness to love, guide, and protect us. Thank You for speaking to us. Father, help us to recognize and listen to Your voice. Protect us from the temptation to listen to others’ voices that would lead us astray and that might lead us away from what Your will is over our lives. Give us the strength and courage to follow You wherever You lead, even when others don’t approve. Father, You are our assurance and our strength, and we give You praise. Amen.

HIS MESSENGERS

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18

God has given each of us the ministry of reconciliation. In this sense, reconciliation has to do with making peace between parties that are at odds with one another. As followers of Jesus, we have the great and sacred responsibility of helping others come to peace with God. Christ made such peace possible through His sacrifice on the Cross. His part is complete, and ours is ongoing.

Every person you see is a candidate for reconciliation. We regard no one as unworthy of God's mercy or from a "worldly point of view" (2 Cor. 5:16). It is easy to view humanity from a worldly perspective, but we must see them from heaven's point of view.

Recently, a family member was telling me about her neighbors. There was a single mom struggling to make a living, a young couple who had taken in the wife's father, a soon-to-be high school graduate who was excited about his future, and a host of others. As she told me about the circumstances of people's lives, she had one prevailing burden, and it was that they would know Jesus! We discussed how that burden could translate into something intentional. Most of these people did not attend church and were unlikely to do so anytime soon.

I asked, "What if your living room became their church?" We agreed it was a great option for the ministry of reconciliation she had been given. This is the ministry each of us is called to do. Go for it!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, help us to see others the way You see them. Grant us opportunities to bring Your peace to the hurting and hopeless of the world. Use our efforts to bring real and lasting change in the lives of others. We're especially mindful of those we love deeply and who are without Christ in the world. Save them, Lord. Holy Spirit, tenderize the hearts of those on the receiving end of our efforts so they may hear Your gospel and respond positively. We ask You to do this wherever we labor for Your glory and the good of others. Amen.

HIS HANDIWORK

EPHESIANS 2:10

Some Bible translations use the word *handiwork* while others use *masterpiece* for the very same context. When I think about the word *masterpiece*, the first thing that comes to my mind is a jewelry store that displays many beautiful items. There are always some masterpieces of jewelry that are not on regular display but kept in a safe and secure glass box and positioned in a place that makes them visible to everyone who comes to the store. What makes these pieces of jewelry so special? Obviously, they are more expensive and beautiful. The reason they look so beautiful is because the goldsmith took so much time and effort to craft them into a beautiful masterpiece. Each one has to go through a vigorous process to get to the place of perfection.

Our Heavenly Father sees you and me the same way. He does not see our mess, but the beautiful masterpiece that He can make us through Christ Jesus. In the same way that a metal goes through rigorous process to become a masterpiece, our salvation through Jesus Christ initiates the process of becoming a masterpiece in God's hand. Our salvation through Jesus cleanses us from all impurities and sins. As we begin to grow in our personal relationship with Jesus, He sanctifies us and empowers us for His service and holy living. He will begin to unfold His plans in our lives so that He can fulfill His purpose through us for His glory. We are His handiwork!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for creating us for Your purpose and glory. Help us to submit to You and walk according to Your direction so that You can lead us into the wonderful plans that You have already created for us. You are the Potter, and we are the clay. Break us, mold us, and shape us to be beautiful and useful vessels in Your hands for Your Kingdom work. Help us to have the confidence and assurance that we are Your handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works for Your glory! In Jesus' name, amen.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 4 WORSHIP NOW

John 4:23

The Lord desires hearts that authentically worship Him. Whether it be in song, conversation, prayer, or art, worship is an expression of gratitude, thankfulness, and love towards God, our Father. He is seeking people who worship Him with sincerity and authenticity, and in order to do so, our hearts must be surrendered completely to Him. We are called to fear the Lord, serve Him, and hold fast to His promises and truth (Deut. 6:13). Everything we do—really, all we are—should flow out of an abundance of praise and worship to the Lord. Let us surrender together, in humble submission to the Lord Jesus, and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

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WORSHIPING OUT OF LONGING

PSALM 63:1

Have you noticed that during a season in the wilderness—dry and parched seasons—we end up seeking God, thirsting for Him, and longing for Him? When we've reached the end of our rope, we draw our eyes to Him. Even if it's desperation and emptiness that lifts our gaze, that is still worship.

It's in the wilderness that we have the space to recognize what's been true all along. If it's not Him, it's emptiness. He is the only living water. We want to experience Him more.

As we long for Him, He reminds us of His sovereignty—how He came through in moments of desperation and emergency, moments of great blessings. He recalls to our mind in each moment how He showed up, how He was there.

And so, we are reminded of how good our Father is. We are reminded of how wide, how long, how deep His love is for us. We are reminded that if we seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, all these things will be added. We worship a good and faithful God.

So, we praise Him. Whatever our wilderness looks like, with true and genuine hearts for God, we turn to worship, praise, and prayer. He is our Father, our Creator. He knows our past, present, and future. Why would we not worship in reverence to Him?



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, we praise You that You are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. No matter our season, You are sovereign over every detail. You are the manna in our lives providing at just the right moment. Thank You for loving us enough to let us come to the end of our own resources so that we see our situation for what it really is—a reminder that we need to utterly depend on You. In this place, You invite us to worship You with our whole heart. This is where we meet You as You're walking with us. We are grateful that You call us Your children. Amen.

WORSHIPING AS CREATION

PSALM 150:6

The Psalms are an amazing example of finding ways to praise God through any circumstance and what it looks like to keep your focus on Him even when things seem completely out of control. Often, we allow our emotions to dictate what we believe about God and who He is. It can be a struggle to fully trust in His sovereignty, especially in difficult circumstances. It is a discipline to choose to focus on the truth of who He is and to shift our hearts to praise even through suffering and trials.

We long for Him to give explanations for things we do not understand—things like incomprehensible tragedies, suffering, and deaths. Our need for control often trumps our willingness to hope and rest in who God is. For if we stopped to meditate on who He really is and stood in awe of all creation, perhaps it would help us not to be so focused on needing to know our “whys,” but instead be drawn to praise and worship He who is due all the glory and praise.

Some things are not yet for us to understand, and faith is being OK with that and trusting that Yahweh, in His love, will reveal what needs to be revealed in its own time. For He alone in His sovereignty knows what is best for us. Let us praise Him in the light and praise Him in our darkest trials. Let all of us with breath praise the Lord!



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for Your incomprehensible love for us. We thank You and praise You for the gift of life and creation. While we struggle at times to believe You are still good, we will strive to anchor our hope in You and remember that You are sovereign. Help us to seek Your face and focus on praising You through all our circumstances. And we ask that You grow our character and reveal more of who You are in it and through it. We love You and praise You with every breath that is in us! Amen.

WORSHIPING THE GOD WHO REIGNS

ROMANS 11:36

How can we comprehend fully surrendering our lives to a sovereign God? Paul gives us this simple yet overarching truth in Romans 11:36 of Jehovah Elyon, our God is sovereign. As we follow our God who reigns, our worship, family, home, calling, assignment, life, and our everything is not for us but rather from, through, and for Him.

As authentic worshipers, it is simple for us to justify holy places and moments as “for God.” Places like your church auditorium or a chair for prayer in your home. Moments such as when you experienced a miracle or an anointing on your life. What if we could see the mundane moments and places as from, through, and for God?

Could we allow the God of the universe to reign in and set apart everyday things in our lives? What if we view making dinner for friends and family as seeing God as our Provider and witnessing the fruit of kindness? What if we enjoy nature, books, music, film, or artwork that showcases the beauty of God’s creations? That exercise and eating well could be seen as stewarding God’s creation. We can even begin to see a pet that brings us love and joy as being from and for God.

Because of this scriptural truth, everything points us back to the Father. When we allow ourselves to see God in everything, the holy and the mundane, our natural response is worship. We experience gratitude, thankfulness, and love towards our Father and cannot help ourselves from giving God the glory and praise.



REFLECTION PRAYER

God, we pray today that You open our eyes to see Your sovereignty in everything we experience. From simple moments, to the peaks of joy, to the valley of sorrow, may we see You at work in all things. Thank You, Lord, for the blessings in my life that I see and those I may never fully understand or recognize. I ask You to continue to reign in my life as I desire to point my life towards Your greatness. Let me worship You with every moment and breath—to You be the glory forever! Amen.

WORSHIPING FOR HIS GLORY

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

As we focus this week on our lives being worship to God, we look at a common and often overlooked verse from Paul to the church in Corinth. Paul speaks here of the lessons that the Corinthians can learn from their ancestors in Egypt.

We often cling to this late verse in the chapter and use it as an encouragement to walk in daily holiness to the Lord. We view this verse as an internal statement, one that keeps us focused on our practices as we weigh the checks and balances of our daily decisions. But I challenge us to examine the passage entirely to see what Paul intends. He begins this sentence with a conjunction. When we see the word “so,” we can expect that whatever follows is the effect of a cause stated previously. Returning to verses 23–30, we see what the “so” references—the past laws of cleanliness and the focus of evangelism at the table.

This has been powerful in my home as we have pursued the evangelism of the table. Around meals, we see growth, vulnerability, and laughter. The table is where we are to show others how we truly live for God. Would we open up our lives to intersect with the normality of others? Would we begin to evangelize and worship at the table? Jesus invites us to His very own table, so let’s be a beautiful representation of the gospel as we pray for our lives to be a worshipful witness.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Lord, continue to bring us closer to You. Would we walk in such a way that pleases You? Would You help us to be Jesus to those around us? Would they know us “as those that have been with Christ?” Thank You for this season of prayer. Allow us to have the courage to walk in the uncomfortable to bring You glory. Help us to be less consumed with the laws of our culture and more concerned about the evangelism of our rhythms. May our worship be pleasing to You. Amen.

WORSHIPING IN GRATITUDE

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Paul says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” I want to pause here and note that everything else Paul says in verse 16 is downstream of this. If we get what he says backwards, we run the risk of looking to ourselves to muster up “thankfulness in our hearts to God.” We’ll end up starting with what we must do rather than what’s already been done for us by Christ.

Instead, Paul begins with God giving us something to be thankful for, which takes the pressure off of us. We don’t have to generate gratitude on our own. So, what has God given us that makes us thankful to Him? The Word of Christ. Let’s meditate on Christ and what He’s done for us, and the rest of what Paul says to do will follow. Let us bring our worship and praise out of a heart that is set on Jesus. May our hearts overflow His goodness.



REFLECTION PRAYER

God our Father, from You comes grace and peace to us. Incline our hearts to do what Paul commands, namely, to let the message of Christ, the gospel, dwell in us richly so that we’re able to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. Father, make the gospel so real to our hearts that we can’t help but sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to You. Jesus, in Your name we pray, amen.

WORSHIPING AS A SACRIFICE

HEBREWS 13:15

It's common that when we hear a word like *sacrifice*, we immediately think of suffering. Of course, there are many instances where that is true—the sacrifices in the Old Testament, of the Old Covenant, were offerings to the Lord for the atonement of sins (guilt offering, sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering, grain offering) and were an act of worship. Before Jesus humbly and nobly paid the price for our transgressions, those sacrifices were necessary to restore humanity and mend the relationship between God and people.

Because of Jesus, we no longer have to offer sacrifices in the same way, but we do need to continuously draw close to Him. Like the Old Testament offerings, we need to restore our relationship with the Lord, worshiping Him through our actions—through our praise and adoration.

Sacrifice is deeply important—it draws us away from ourselves, reminding us of who we are in Christ. Our sacrifices mean nothing without the profound sacrifice of Jesus—everything we do, everything we offer, must be through faith and proclamation in and to the Lord.

Continuously offering God a sacrifice of praise not only means we are to worship the Lord, but we are to be sacrificial in the manner in which we devote ourselves to Him. Sacrifice and praise are woven together. Praise without sacrifice doesn't mean much—it costs us nothing. To sacrificially worship means that we lay down ourselves to draw close to Him, bringing forth all we have to offer.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, we are so thankful for Your sacrificial love. We know that we often lose sight of worshiping You, especially in context of our own sacrifice. Would You teach us to humbly come before You and praise You exactly as You're calling us to? Forgive us when we believe we're praising You without any sort of sacrifice. Draw us closer, by Your Holy Spirit, to live our authentic faith in You to praise You in word and deed. Teach us to love You deeper as we openly profess Your name. Amen.

WORSHIPING AS A SACRED RHYTHM

2 PETER 3:18

I once had a mentor who always said, “Context is king.” So, let’s look at the context of our verse for today, 2 Peter 3:18. Before we continue, take a moment to read the entire third chapter.

In this chapter, we see a dichotomy of warnings about the last, evil days and the beauty of the patient character of God with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. So, where does worship fit into all of this?

My brothers and sisters, as we meditate on worship as a sacred rhythm, I would encourage us to see it as a rhythm we are beginning now that will never end for all eternity. Let us be found as followers of Jesus that praise and give glory in the difficult days here on earth and continue that praise while we get to stand in His glorious presence. Our acts of worship now are but a glimpse of eternity. The rhythms of work and arduous tasks and burdens will pass away, but our rhythms, which include worship to the one, true God, are what we can rest in. Glory and praise to the Lord is what lasts! So, “To Him be the glory both now and forever!”

How can you incorporate worship into your daily rhythms this week in ways that you’ve never tried before?



REFLECTIVE PRAYER

Jesus, help me to pause. Help me to be still before You and worship You from a heart that is content and true. Would You help me see the larger picture of worship? Would my rhythms not be a distraction from Your presence but rather flow from worshipping You. You are worthy of it all. Amen.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 5 FAMILY NOW

1 Corinthians 12:27

Families are important for growing, celebrating, enjoying, finding love, communication, safety, and a sense of belonging. However, many forces in the world seek to tear families apart. Similarly, there are competing forces that aim to separate the family of God, even though we share the same Father. In these troublesome yet encouraging times, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we must now safeguard and strengthen the Body of Christ. Let each one of us continue to grow strong and thereby grow together as the family of God serving out the purposes of God.

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PERSEVERING TOGETHER

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

Paul's exhortation to persevere in the Lord's work is as timely today as it was the day it was written. There remains the urgent need for the family of God to persevere in our commitment to one another and to the mission of King Jesus.

We live in a world in which division, shrinking back, and questioning whether any hope remains are real temptations for many of us. But God, through Paul, commands us to be as immovable in our perseverance as a giant sequoia is at withstanding the fiercest of storms.

Paul roots this charge in the gospel reality that death has been conquered through the victorious Resurrection of Jesus. We remain steadfast and immovable because we share Christ's victory.

We see in 1 Corinthians that these good works seek the welfare of others. Good works done for the family of God strive for unity and the building up of our brothers and sisters in love. Good works done for the lost involve becoming all things to all people so that through faithful gospel proclamation, we might win some to Christ.

After all has been considered, we resolve to abound in the Lord's work because our Father has said it is never in vain. Even when our earthly eyes cannot see the fruit, we persevere because He who promised is faithful.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, I thank and praise You for adopting me into Your family. Let the truth that Jesus has defeated death sink deep into my heart. May it cause me to be immovable and abounding in good works, especially in service to others. May I eagerly pursue unity with fellow Christians. May I boldly share the good news of Jesus with lost friends, family, and neighbors. Help me not grow weary or discouraged, knowing working for You is never in vain. Father, please show me one thing I can do to abound in Your work today. Amen.

SERVING WITH EACH OTHER

PHILIPPIANS 2

Philippians 2 tells us that our attitude as Christians should be like that of Christ Jesus: one marked by humility, where we consider others before we consider ourselves. I am convicted that all too often, I consider the calling of Christ as an exclusively individual calling: “What has Christ called *me* to do? What does He gifted *me* to do?” However, Philippians reminds us that Christ’s calling is to serve those around us as He modeled for us.

Jesus humbly and faithfully served His “family” of disciples and considered their needs as more important than His own. He spent His life humbly, graciously, and patiently serving them, though He could have easily fulfilled His mission without them.

In seeking to live out the call of Jesus on your life, let me encourage you to embody Philippians 2 where you are right now. Who is around you? What do they need? How can you serve them? Jesus says in John 17:21 that the world will believe the gospel when the family of God lives in unity.

God has called you to be a gospel witness to the world by simply being filled with the Holy Spirit and living with the attitude of Christ. Serve those around you in humility. In doing so, Christ not only transforms you, but also the family of God and ultimately, the world.



REFLECTION PRAYER

The following prayer is from John Wesley and communicates a heart transformed by the humility of Jesus well:

“I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, place me with whom You will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for You or set aside for You, praised for You, or criticized for You. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to Your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and holy God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it. Amen.”

SHOWING COMPASSION TO OTHERS

EPHESIANS 4:32

I have been learning the importance of loving my enemies. It's easy to love those we have a mutual love for, who think like us, or have a personality that we enjoy hanging out with. On the other hand, the commandment to love our enemies isn't quite as easily obtained.

As we focus on the family this week, I think of not only my immediate family but also the family of God. Within both family units, there are members who are difficult to love, perhaps because they have hurt, disappointed, or offended us. The commandment to love our enemies still holds true. Allowing my heart to become tender with a deeper understanding of walking in their shoes, seeing the situation through their perspective, and feeling the pain that I have caused the one who feels like an enemy is the beginning of loving them as Christ loves us.

Practicing intentional compassion begins with noticing the hurt, especially the hurt that we have caused. Compassion grows when we allow ourselves to sit in the pain with the person we have hurt without trying to fix it. Sitting with them validates the pain, and we will find our ability to feel compassion growing.

Let's pray that we are a family who desire to love our enemies.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we thank You that You are our perfect example as a God of compassion. Relationships and families are Your idea. You desire that we are kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted, compassionate, and understanding, forgiving one another readily and freely, just as God in Christ has forgiven us. With You living in us, we have the Holy Spirit's power to love others with the same heart of compassion, mercy, and grace that You have bestowed on us. We pray for Your strength to truly love one another. In the powerful name of Jesus, amen.

EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS

EPHESIANS 3:20

The Israelites piled stones or made altars to remember the great and mighty works of their God. They would then tell their children, their children's children, and their community how supernaturally God had worked on their behalf. Do we tell our children about the mighty works of God in our lives, in our family's lives, in our church, and in our community?

It is important that we encourage and inspire others so they can know that our God wants an intimate relationship with them and can and will do great things they never imagined. We may not see God working, and we may not feel He is working, but amid the struggles and challenges of life, we can trust the heart of God.

It may not work the way we would do it, but He will work it out for our good. We need to help our family, our church family, and our community to see that the God we serve is a God of intimacy that cares for each one of us. We must impart this to others so that they can know and serve the God that is above every other. We must live in an expectation of God's power.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, help us to remember Your mighty works, and may we expect these same works in our own lives. May we instill these actions and memories in our family, church family, and community. Help us to reflect on Your goodness and pass such down to the next generation, our family, and our community. You are great and mighty. Amen.

STRIVING TO DO GOOD TO EACH OTHER

GENESIS 50:20

When I was kid, I had an intense dislike for one of my brothers who was seven years my senior. He was a yeller. He hit me often. He kept me from doing fun things. I was relieved when he went off to the Army's basic training. However, my celebration was short-lived because he was an Army Reservist who was bound to come home after a few months.

When I grew a little older, since my brother was a boxer, I took up boxing lessons in hopes that one day I could give him a taste of his own medicine. Years went by, and I left the nest. By then, my former nemesis became more loving and caring toward me. He even came to visit me several times, which was neither a cheap nor short trip. To this day, I cannot remember when my anger toward him subsided, but it did.

The people who are the closest to us can cause the deepest wounds and the longest heartbreaks. Often, their behavior towards us was the product of their own brokenness, insecurities, or jealousies. God used my relationship with my brother to allow me to extend forgiveness and for me to witness redemption. Is God able to turn the offense, the wound, or the evil perpetrated against you by your loved one into something good?



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Lord, when a transgression is perpetrated against me by a loved one or someone else, please help me declare, "What someone meant for evil, God meant it for good," as I witness Your perfect will unfold in my life! Thank You for Your steadfastness. Amen.

CARRYING EACH OTHERS' BURDENS

GALATIANS 6:2

Paul's statement begs us to ask, "What is the law of Christ?" The Scriptures invite us to investigate this question because Paul does not explicitly express his thoughts, and many verses volunteer themselves for consideration. Perhaps our best options are Jesus' own words such as: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34); "Pick up your cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24); and finally, "No greater love exists than one who would lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

These verses incline one towards the understanding that the law of Christ is not Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament laws but how He lived His life. Jesus' idea of love encapsulates the expressions of burden-bearing and self-giving. It perfectly describes His life: intentionally living to seek the ultimate betterment of others, despite the circumstances, even at the cost of ultimate personal sacrifice.

Jesus offers humanity the opportunity to restore its once-great state of "the image of God," free from our fallen nature, as a result.

If the Church is responsible for emulating Christ's life to the nations, how much more should we imitate Christ to the church Body? How can we better emulate Christ's life and mission to our church family than bearing one another's burdens—even if that burden is sin? In embodying Christ, we represent His burden-bearing and self-giving love, our Heavenly Father's patience, and the Holy Spirit's vital restorative work within us.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, open my eyes to the things unseen, my ears to the unheard, and my mind to the unknown so that I may resemble Christ to those in and out of the Church—that I eagerly desire, soberly examine, humbly accept, and perfectly perform the things most pleasing to You. For the glory, honor, and praise of Your name. I pray these things in Your Son's holy name, who lives and reigns with You, together with the Holy Spirit, now, before, and forever. Amen.

EVERYONE WITH EYES ON JESUS

HEBREWS 12:2

The writer leads into this verse by highlighting the faith of those who have witnessed God's work in their lives—Abraham, Noah, Rehab, Samson, and many other lives of faithful perseverance unto death. The challenge to fix our eyes on Jesus calls us to remember that Christ is well-acquainted with the joy and the sacrifice.

Yet, there is one other not mentioned here that my mind turns to when I read this verse—Jesus' mother, Mary. She watched as her son was ridiculed, flogged, mocked, and hung on a cross. Scripture tells us she remained when many fled. Her eyes were fixed on Jesus, and in the moment of His greatest suffering, she was not forgotten.

Maybe you feel forgotten today. Maybe the suffering seems too great. Maybe you wonder if Jesus sees you. In His weakest moment, our Lord and Savior cried out for the world. He continues to intercede for you and me. When all seems hopeless, you can confidently turn your eyes to Jesus.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may You give us eyes to see the hope of glory that your Son has provided to this world. Thank You that in our greatest joys and sufferings, You are there, and we can look to You knowing that You are interceding on our behalf. Amen.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 6 EVANGELIZE NOW

2 Corinthians 6:2

Queen Esther risked everything to go before the king to help bring salvation to her people. There was a point when she said it was time to act. Her mentor, Mordecai, said, "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). In our world today, people are desperate for rescue from empty lives and fears that plague them. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says that the time of God's favor and the day of salvation is now. Let's pray powerful prayers asking God to use us for such a time as this in our society to share His salvation, that people will receive His love for them.

DAY

DAY

DAY

DAY

DAY

FREELY FORGIVEN

ISAIAH 55:6-7

Dreaming is interesting. In some dreams, we possess gifts we don't actually have, like powers that allow us to fly, great wealth, or fame. In other dreams, the gifts we take for granted are taken away.

We've all had a dream where something was chasing us while we were unable to run away. Or what about the dreams where we want to warn someone or cry out for help, but our voice doesn't seem to work?

Personally, these are the dreams that affect me the most. Unable to flee from the evil that is pursuing me, I feel powerless. When I call for help and no one hears my call, I feel hopeless and fearful. That is what makes this passage so beautiful.

Forgiveness, while a truly amazing gift, is not the only gift present in the passage. It is not even the first gift given to us. God, in His provisional grace, gives us the ability to seek and call Him. Who are we that we can seek the eternal Creator and Judge and find Him? Even more, who are we that He listens when we call? Why should a holy God hear the calls of those who act as His enemy?

According to His character, His gifts continue to come. God gives an invitation for the wicked to turn from sin and receive compassion, not justice. Wow! The all-knowing and all-powerful Judge invites the guilty to receive a pardon.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we thank You that You may be found by those who seek You. Though there are many who are lost, that are hopeless, fearful, and powerless, You can still be found by those who seek You. We thank You that You hear us when we call. We give You glory and praise! Amen.

BRINGING MANY

DANIEL 12:3

While growing up, my father often shared with me one of his favorite Bible verses, Daniel 12:3:

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

“Julie, win souls to Christ!” he often exclaimed.

My earliest recollection of his evangelistic zeal was when I was 12. One Saturday morning, I experienced his “waffle evangelism.” My father had met a family at a department store and brought them home with him. “Julie, grind the wheat. It’s time for a waffles!” Eventually, the whole family of eight came to know Christ.

As I watched my father more closely, I learned his strategy.

It all started with fervent prayer. Even after he retired, my father woke up early in the morning and began to pray fervent prayers for “divine appointments.” Dad befriended people at supermarkets, department stores, or just on the street. There, he would meet people open to the gospel and lead them to Christ.

When international students and refugees started arriving, things became really wild!

In 1979, a member the king’s Cabinet from a far-off country fled to Omaha. My father befriended the majority religion leader and eventually, his daughter came to live with us. In the evenings, she would often read the Bible with me. Here was a young lady from a 99 percent majority religion country reading God’s Word with me. Recently, one family member came to Christ and was baptized.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, I realize that the urgency of prayer is crucial in reaching the lost. In John 15, You ask Your disciples to abide; if we abide in You, we bear fruit. Apart from You, we can do nothing. Father, as I abide in You, I pray for divine appointments, that You rescue people out of darkness into light! I ask You persistently! In Matt 7:7-8, the verbs are continuous actions: “Ask and keep asking, keep and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking.” I petition Your throne of grace on behalf of my friends here and around the world! Amen.

SAVED THROUGH FAITH

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

Ephesians 2:8-10 makes simple the reality of the good news of Jesus. It cannot be earned in any way. It is a gift of grace, the unmerited favor of God. A gift must be received from the giver—in this case, through faith in the Gift Giver, Jesus.

How do you know that you have received this gift via grace instead of striving in human effort? Verse 10 makes this plain—a transformed life. In Jesus, by grace and faith, we become God's workmanship or masterpiece. He molds us to become in all ways like Jesus, and this is the evidence that we are doing so by grace, not works.

I once read that only grace can change us in the consistent way we desire. Putting off the old self and its propensity towards works is critical to growth in grace, which only comes by grace in the first place. This truly is a wonderful gift of grace that saves us but also sanctifies us.

We can never embrace grace too much nor can we be too ruthless to eliminate any sort of works mentality we may have. This personal experience radically impacts our attitude and motivation towards evangelism. Having drunk from the well of grace, we cannot help but tell others. If evangelism is lacking in your life, look to grace. It will change your practice in amazing ways.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for Your gift of grace. Help us to drink this gift deeply and in so doing, find a compelling reason and a transformative message to give to friends, family, and coworkers. The message of Your grace is given through the gospel. Help us to eliminate a works mentality from our lives so that we can find the freedom of being transformed. Amen.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

MATTHEW 5:16

I work part-time as a housekeeper at a local hotel; it's a fairly new gig for me. Admittedly, it's a task that requires more humility than I tend to possess . . . especially when I first began. I was elbow deep in a mess that wasn't my own, complaining about the carelessness of guests, and arguing in my spirit about having such a menial job when the Lord simply asked, "Can you make beds for my glory?" I said, "Yes," hastily, but "How, Jesus?" was my immediate rebuttal.

You see, the goal of a housekeeper is to remain rather unseen. We quietly invade a space just long enough to make it welcoming again. The only thing that should linger is a fresh scent! So, aside from the bedside Bible, I didn't know what inspiration was to be found in fluffed pillows or hospital corners. Is it even possible to share the good news of Jesus when nobody is present to receive Him?

Well, I'm beginning to understand that nothing is wasted in God's economy! Our Lord makes Himself visible in all sorts of ways, including the inconspicuous deeds of a housekeeper. For wherever we shine our light, that place is illuminated, even if only one's spirit is able to perceive it. When there are no words exchanged to convey our faith, our willingness becomes our witness. The works of our hands point to the heart of Jesus, for service speaks of God's love in a language that every homesick soul can understand.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, help us to seek Your glory, and may You make Yourself evident in all our deeds. Please soften our hearts to serve one another in genuine love and humility. Oh, Lord, that You would make us bearers of Your light in every task, we pray. Amen.

PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

ROMANS 10:15-17

In this passage, Paul was quoting from Isaiah 52:7, where we read: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings glad tidings, who announces peace, who brings good news, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion: ‘Your God reigns!’”

God could have chosen any way to bring the message of salvation—perhaps with an angelic messenger or by working directly without a human preacher. However, God’s “normal” way of bringing people to Jesus Christ is through the preaching of the gospel, and He has chosen you to do it.

We rejoice with all those who have been saved by Jesus around the world. But still, it’s not enough. A lot of work still needs to be done. Let me show you some numbers related to this topic. The total world population is near eight billion people. A French researcher, Sebastian Fath, estimates that there are 2.5 billion Christians around the world, and only 660 million are considered evangelical Christians.

People’s rejection of the gospel is no excuse for us to not proclaim it. It does not take away our responsibility to preach to every creature.

Paul also says in 2 Timothy 4:1–2: “I urge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the Dead in his manifestation and in his kingdom, that you preach the Word; that you urge in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all patience and doctrine.”



REFLECTION PRAYER

Almighty God, forgive me for not trying hard enough to preach Your Word outside the Church. Help me bring the good news of salvation to my family, the neighborhood, and to those places where the gospel has not yet reached. Father, even if people reject me, don’t let me stop from sharing the salvation that we only find in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

JULIE ARANT

Since 1979, Julie has been on a journey that has opened her eyes to beautiful people from the nations and has taken her as an “armchair traveler” to the ends of the earth. It all began when her father and mother met a special international friend at a local supermarket.

EDGAR CASTRO

Edgar was born in El Salvador. On October 16, 2004, he married Bertha N. Martinez, and they have two children. In 2016, he received the call to work as the Hispanic coordinator for the Central Pacific District. In 2020, Edgar was appointed to lead the CPD in the area of church multiplication.

HANNAH CASTRO

Hannah is the senior editor/story liaison at the National Office. She is passionate about drawing people closer to Jesus through testimony and story. She and her husband, Ciro, live in Columbus, Ohio.

CHARLES CHAPMAN

Since 2021, Charles has served as the candidate development specialist for Alliance Missions where he helps recruit, develop, and deploy IW candidates from all around the country. Charles moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio with his wife, Liz, and children, Julia and Marcus, in 2022 to join the National Office team.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

ISAAC CHARLES

Isaac serves as the pastor and church planter at Jubilee Intercultural Alliance Church in Columbus, Ohio, and he and his family are from India. He recently received his ordination with the Ohio Valley District. He has served in Church Ministries at the C&MA National Office in Reynoldsburg since September 2021. He is married to his wife, Leena, and they have two boys, Brayden and Bryan.

ADAM CLEWER

Adam is a father, son, follower, leader, minister, angler, writer, swimmer, and student of theology. He is surprisingly good at playing pool one-handed.

BILL CORBIN

Bill was a college pastor for 25 years, he has been married to Heidi for 25 years, and they have five kids. He loves Jesus, loves students, and loves the gospel!

ANA CUEVAS

Ana is the national director for Alliance Women. She has a bachelor's degree in missiology from Toccoa Falls College. She is a certified teacher and works as an ESL teacher in Ohio. Ana loves to go on road trips with her husband, Jorge, and two sons, Jorge Daniel and Jonatán.

MATT CYR

Matt currently serves as a workplace chaplain with Corporate Chaplains of America in southeast Wisconsin. He is married and has two young children. In his free time, he enjoys road cycling, good coffee, and family time.

MARY DELLOS

Mary has been serving with the C&MA since 1982. She and her husband, Don, have been church planters in the States, missionaries in Argentina, and dorm parents at the Alliance Academy in Ecuador. She has been serving companies as a chaplain in Denver for the past 18 years.

STACY DOUGLAS

Stacy currently serves alongside her husband in his role as district superintendent of the Central Pacific District of the C&MA. She is also a nurse on a med/surg floor. She is privileged to work at a Christian hospital in California that allows her to be both nurse and pastor.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

JUSTIN DUBOSE

Justin is the lead pastor at Alliance Bible Church in Baytown, Texas. He is also a CH (MAJ) in the USAR serving as chaplain for the 7th Psychological Operations Group (POG). A husband to Alanna since 2005, they have five beautiful children. He is passionate about training and empowering leaders.

ELLIOT ENNS

Elliot grew up as a third culture kid (TCK) with the C&MA Canada. He taught for several years at an international school in Ghana, where he met his wife, Morgan. They moved to Columbus, Ohio, in 2021, and he joined the National Office as an administrative coordinator for Alliance Missions in 2022.

PHYLLIS FITZWATER

Phyllis is a Board clinical chaplain and Board-certified pastoral counselor. She is a consecrated woman in ministry with The Christian & Missionary Alliance and has also served with her local hospice programs. She has served on the Board for the Orlando Health Bioethics Committee and was the Board chair for Life Legacy.

TOM FLANDERS

Tom serves as district superintendent for the Alliance Southeast. He and his wife, Chris, have served in the C&MA for more than thirty years, shepherding local congregations and the Alliance New England District prior to their most recent assignment.

THOMAS GEORGE

Thomas is a disciple of Jesus, husband, father, grandfather, pastor to pastors, and district superintendent. He is also the C&MA's corporate secretary.

SARAH GRIMES

Sarah lives in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, with her husband and three kids. They like trying new things and often find themselves in way over their heads. They tend to need Jesus an awful lot.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

LORIE HUNEYCUTT

Lorie is a wife, mom, and full-time caregiver. She resides with her husband, Paul, daughter Rylie (18), and son Hudson (16) in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. She is passionate about advocating for overlooked people groups and being a voice for the disability and caregiver communities through writing.

WILLIE JOHNSON

Willie is the pastor of Redefine Church in St. Louis, Missouri.

JENNY KARR

Jenny is the director for IW engagement and partnerships at the National Office. She has trained and coached thousands of Christian workers in partnership development over the past 10 years. She and her husband relocated to Ohio last year and have one daughter studying English at Vanderbilt University.

DAVID LANE

David and his wife, Susan, live in Ohio where David serves as the district superintendent. They have two adult kids. David passionately desires that the 7.3 million people living in his district have a repeated opportunity to see, hear, and respond to the gospel.

KYLE MAGSTADT

Kyle is the associate superintendent for church multiplication in the North Central District. He lives in Roseville, MN, with his wife, Molly, and two kids, June and Elm.

SARAH MANKO

Sarah was born and raised a Buckeye in central Ohio. She attends The Crosswalk (Alliance) Church in Reynoldsburg, OH, and is in her final year of dental school at OSU. She is excited to see where God will take her following graduation.

VICTOR MATOS

Victor is an Army chaplain serving in Fort Riley, Kansas. He served as an associate pastor in Colorado Springs before joining the chaplaincy. Victor is married to Christine, and they have two children, Caleb (18) and Allie (15).

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

KENDALL MCKEE

Kendall is a college pastor and residency coordinator at First Alliance Church in Lexington, Kentucky. He loves to spend his days discipling the next generation and walking through life with those close to him.

JESSICA MCCULLOUGH

Jessica lives in Lima, Ohio, with her husband and two boys. She serves in missions and family life at Shawnee Alliance Church and is also the district missions mobilizer for the Ohio Valley District. She enjoys reading, music, volleyball, card games, cats, cows and ducks, and Jesus.

MIRIAM NELSON

Miriam is a licensed teacher, counselor, mother of four, and wife of 19 years. She enjoys serving others and believes each person is gifted by God to bring heavenly influence. Who she is and who she is not are shaped by the hand of Jesus in her life!

DAVID PEPPERS

David fell in love with the Lord when he was 13. When he was around 15 or so, he slipped away from his first love. At the age of 21, he came back and has been pursuing the goodness of the Lord ever since. David is the executive director for Alliance Benefits.

JESSE PFAU

Jesse and his beautiful wife, Eli, have one son, Fitz. They enjoy food and currently reside in Columbus, Ohio.

KEVIN PIES

Kevin is the executive director for the Alliance Chaplain Ministries for military and federal chaplains. He is a retired U.S. Army chaplain colonel; a graduate of Crown College (1982); Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1987 (MDiv); and an Army War College Fellow graduate of the U.S. Institute of Peace (2014).

JEFF PRICE

Jeff serves as a teaching pastor at Alliance Community Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and is a U.S. Army chaplain. Jeff and his wife, Megan, have one daughter, Charley.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

ALAN RATHBUN

Alan serves on the Eastern PA District team and as cohost of the Alliance EquippingU podcast. He has also served as a youth pastor, church planter, and pastor. He's married to Sandra, and they have three married children. He loves road trips, baseball, disc golfing, and eating good ice cream.

AMY ROEDDING

Amy Roedding is passionate about helping the next generation step into their ministry calling in the Alliance family. She serves as the director for Candidate Recruitment and Development for The Alliance, and though her role oversees both men and women being developed for Kingdom work in The Alliance, she enthusiastically pursues helping women find their place in ministry. Amy also teaches spiritual formation for Crown College's online ministry program. Amy and her husband live in Pataskala, Ohio.

JOSH SADLON

Josh is a worship leader, event producer, and songwriter who serves with Alliance Youth and Alliance Worship. Josh, his wife, Emily, and son, Gideon, live on a small farm in Kentucky.

JIM SAPPPIA

Jim, with his wife Kathy and their three children, served with aXcess for 20 years in Thailand and a CAC country. They currently live in Pickerington, Ohio, where Jim serves as the director for Global Link at the National Office.

TERRY SMITH

Terry Smith is the vice president for Church Ministries for The Alliance. He and his wife, Ruth, have two married sons and five grandchildren. Terry holds degrees from Toccoa Falls College and Crown College. He is the author of *Changing Course: Leading Older Churches in a New Direction*.

RAYNA STRONG

Rayna and her husband, Brian, live in rural Ohio and are members and servants of Clear Fork Alliance Church. They have two adult sons and daughters-in-law. In 2022, Rayna began working at the National Office as the administrative assistant for Global Link.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

PANG THAO

Pang grew up with 12 siblings and attended church in the Hmong District her entire life. She has served in her church in a variety of capacities since accepting Christ at the age of 15. She serves with Envision in operations and moved with The Alliance from Colorado Springs to Columbus, Ohio.

STEVE TRUDEL

Steve has had the great joy of living on Cape Cod for almost 30 years. He has been the lead pastor of Cape Cod Bible Alliance Church for the last six years. He is married to Alison, a Jesus-loving follower of God, and they have four wonderful children.

MICHELLE UNWIN

Michelle (“Meesh”) is the director for the International Placement Office. She has been married to Steve for 32 years. They have two amazing adult children, Kaylee and Noah, and one weird dog, Moe. Meesh loves flip-flops, sunshine, and Coca-Cola, and she really loves raising up new workers!

OLIVIA VINSON

Olivia is the assistant campus pastor and chapel worship coordinator at Crown College in St. Bonifacious, MN. She has loved being a part of the C&MA family in Troy, MI, and Lexington, KY, and has a heart to develop the future leaders of the Church through higher education.

LISA VOGAN

Lisa has the privilege of serving in the Northeastern District as disciplemaking specialist. She has been serving the Alliance family for more than 30 years in various leadership roles. She lives near Buffalo, New York, with her husband, Rohn.

HALEY WARRICK

Haley is a lifelong resident of Columbus, Ohio, a devoted wife, and has been involved in worship and various children’s ministries. She is currently called to the ministry of motherhood, staying at home to raise her twin toddlers.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WRITERS

JAMIE ZACHARIAS

Jamie serves as the children's ministry director of Jubilee Intercultural Alliance Church. She is married and has two children. Jamie has been teaching for 17 years, and her mission is to inspire the next generation and help them and their families grow in their faith and have a relationship with Jesus.