

40 DAYS OF *prayer*



THEALLIANCE

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WEEK 2

REPENTANCE—TURNING FROM OUR UNHOLINESS

This week, we will allow the spotlight to turn inward. As we pray, we will open our lives to a deep search and cleansing by the Holy Spirit. While repenting of our own sinful attitudes and behaviors, we will also pray prayers of repentance for our nation, which has turned away from God and His truth and has not valued the precious gift of life.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CONVICTION

LANTZIA C. THAO

We live in a sinful world and have fallen short of God's standard. As Christians, this reality affects us as it did the prophet Isaiah when he saw God and exclaimed, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (6:5a). It is the work and conviction of the Holy Spirit that brings us to such a realization. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4–7 Paul shed light on this truth, describing how the gospel first came to the believers "with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction" (5a). Although they were suffering severely, the Holy Spirit helped them to welcome the gospel with joy. As a result, they "became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (7).

As the Body of Christ, we are now in great need of the Holy Spirit's conviction in our lives, our churches, our districts, and the C&MA. He is our helper in convicting our community, our country, and our world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment (see John 16:8). Therefore, let us spend time conversing with God, seeking His direction and conviction of our sins, or unholiness, in the following areas.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to show you what He wants you to do regarding yourself and your church.
2. Ask Him to show our district superintendents what to do regarding our districts.
3. Ask God to show our C&MA president and his staff what to do regarding our denomination.

PERSONAL EXAMINATION

JEN SCHEPENS

Personal examination is a powerful tool to see where our lives don't align with God's holiness. It can highlight areas in which we can welcome the Spirit's deep, transforming work. Psalm 139 highlights three truths to deepen our personal examination in prayer.

Read Psalm 139:1–6. *You are known.* No matter where you are in your faith journey, you have a history with God. He has been present in your story. He has searched you and is with you regardless of your circumstances.

Read Psalm 139:7–16. *You are seen.* God's presence brings light, which illuminates what is hidden and reveals truth. When you truly see who God is, you are ready to see the truth of who you are—one He has created and knit together in the womb.

Read Psalm 139:17–24. *Search me.* Now step out in humility and ask for God's scrutiny. He knows you, sees you, and has created you. Ask for His revelation as you personally examine anything preventing you from living out your identity as His creation.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Welcome the Lord into this moment, this place, and acknowledge His presence. Trace your journey to this point and recall how God has been with you. Where have you seen Him before? How has He been present? How has He already worked in you?
2. Welcome the Spirit's illuminating presence to bring light to the dark spaces in your soul. Using verse 14, take a moment to praise and worship your Creator.
3. Pray verses 23 and 24, asking God to reveal any offensive way in you. What came to mind as you prayed those words? Ask God to reveal what is hidden. Pray that the Spirit will show you areas that are not aligned with how God created you.

UNCONFESSSED SIN

KEN BALDES

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

I have often thought of unconfessed sin as like stepping on a garden hose that prevents the fast flow of water. How many times have you had to stop what you're doing to remove the kink in the hose so more water could flow freely? Ezekiel provides another vivid picture of unconfessed sin in chapter 36. He contrasts a heart of stone with a heart of flesh. Take some time today to read Ezekiel 36:22–38.

In Psalm 51, David gives us helpful words in verse 2: “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” As we begin 2021, would you prayerfully consider fixing any kinks in your life's hose between your heart and God's heart so the Holy Spirit can flow more fully in your life? A broken and contrite (repentant) heart (see Psalm 51:17) will produce a tender heart toward God and others.

Over time, unconfessed sin results in a calloused heart to the things that matter most to God. As we ponder this sobering reality, here are three questions to ask yourself (and perhaps discuss with your church's leadership).



PRAYER POINTS:

1. What am I indifferent to that needs to be confessed? Have I, perhaps unknowingly, developed a heart of stone toward the unborn who die through abortion; the injustices around me that I remain silent about; or the marginalized people in my community whom I pass or forget about because they live “over there”? January 17 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and provides an opportunity in a few days to corporately repent for the sin of abortion.
2. What pride in my life or lack of dependence on God do I need to confess?
3. What step of obedience is being thwarted because of unconfessed sin in my life that may result in not clearly hearing the voice of the Lord?

SECRET SIN/HIDDEN SIN

TED KANG

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9).

“Faithful” and “just”—isn’t it strange to find these two words in one sentence? I’d much prefer to have God’s faithfulness than justice when it comes to my sins. Divine mercy is a profound mystery. In every confession of our wrongs, a transaction takes place on that old rugged cross—a transaction where God keeps His end of the bargain to be faithful, while our Savior takes the blow of God’s ruthless justice. Confession is the Father’s gracious gift to His children. It is the key that unlocks every shackle of guilt and shame that separates us from God and from one another.

As children, my brother and I would play with an antique Omega watch that belonged to my late grandfather. One day, play turned into fight, destroying this family heirloom. I managed to convince my younger brother that he was responsible for this crime. Then I made him an offer he couldn’t resist. We put what was left of the watch back in the drawer and kept the transgression a secret. For the next several weeks, I turned him into my personal slave. When he refused to serve me, all I had to do was point at my wrist as a reminder of my mercy. This went on for weeks until he got so tired of being held hostage that he decided to come clean. He tearfully confessed to my grandmother that he had broken the watch. I will never forget what I heard that day. With a gentle smile, my grandmother said, “I know. I’ve just been waiting for you to tell me.” One confession set him free.

Our Father calls us to confession, not because He is ignorant of our wrongs, but because our shame and guilt keep us from coming to Him boldly.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Let us each come clean before God today.
2. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will restore the purity of His Church.
3. Let us pray that the Alliance family will be a light in spiritually dark places.

STRONGHOLDS THAT NEED TO BE BROKEN **DAVID AND TY KING**

Strongholds usually begin with nothing more than a glance away from the face of Christ toward something or someone else. Over time this substitute (whether entertainment, relationships, money, approval, addictions, unforgiveness) becomes a controlling influence in our hearts, hindering our pilgrimage with Jesus. It grows like a spiritual cancer, killing the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. It's an idol on steroids, and the issue is always Lordship.

Use the prayer below as you sit in God's presence to evaluate your heart and discern any strongholds. Remember, your Father is waiting with open arms. The ring and the robe are ready. Run home.



PRAYER POINTS:

Lord Jesus, I quiet myself in Your presence and choose to submit to You as my Savior and Lord. I ask that You open the closed-off places in my heart and expose them to the light of the Holy Spirit. Reveal all strongholds and heal me.

- 1.** Where I am blind to my own sin, restore my sight, for only You can bring healing to the hidden places of my heart. (Pause and confess those things that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.)
- 2.** Where I have allowed the enemy to steal Your work in my life, I now take my stand in Jesus' name and authority, taking back the stolen ground. (Continue to pray as led by the Holy Spirit.)
- 3.** I ask, Father, for complete freedom in every area of my life. Fill me afresh with the Holy Spirit so I will be strengthened to stand firm and become more like Jesus. Renew my hunger for Your Word and holiness.
- 4.** I choose now to throw off the sin that has entangled me and once again fix my eyes on Jesus Christ, my only Lord. Amen (see Romans 6:19; Luke 15:11-31; Galatians 5:16; Isaiah 29:13; 1 Peter 2:24-25; Galatians 5:1; James 5:16; Hebrews 12:1-2).

UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS

KAREN GUSTAFSON

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Rom. 14:19).

Conflict can exist wherever there are people, and whether we like it or not, we all will face interpersonal tensions. When confronting difficulties in a relationship, as in any threatening situation, our initial reaction is often to fight or flee. Fighting can look like accusing the other person or group, attacking their character or motives while defending our own actions. Fleeing can look like withdrawing from interactions with the person involved or cutting them off emotionally. (Certainly in dangerous situations, safety may require distance.) These options, however, leave conflicts unresolved, relationships harmed or broken, and our own soul agitated or cold.

Jesus took unresolved conflict seriously and taught another way. He told us in Mark 11:25 that when we pray and hold anything against anyone, we need to forgive and also receive forgiveness. In Matthew 5:23–24, Jesus instructed us to seek out reconciliation when we go to worship while knowing someone has something against us. In both passages, Jesus links our prayer and worship with the need to resolve interpersonal conflict. No matter how the conflict started, Jesus wants us to take steps to make peace as far as possible (see Romans 12:18).

Not every relationship problem will end the way we desire, but the steps we take will open the possibility for resolution, bring peace to our souls, and give us joy in fellowship with the Lord. May we make every effort to promote peace in these difficult situations and build each other up.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. What conflict is still unsettled or causes unrest in my soul?
2. Who may be feeling that I have offended them (whether justified or not)?
3. What steps is the Lord asking me to take, making every effort to bring peace to these situations?

GOD'S FAITHFUL FORGIVENESS

JASON KIM

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (Jn. 1:9).

As believers we experience two kinds of repentance: one that ushers the natural man from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light and one that restores the sin-laden disciple to whiter-than-snow purity.

Many Christians live as though God's forgiving grace applies primarily—if not only—to the “first” repentance—the act of justification at conversion. We offer eternal gratitude for this metamorphic act of salvation while often overlooking our desperate need for His daily mercy and forgiveness as we stumble into sin.

This verse brings two simple truths to light that are essential to our ongoing spiritual growth and renewal: (1) Christians—no matter how devout—continue to sin; and (2) God the Father, because of His boundless love for us, made allowance for our transgressions through His Son's shed blood—the source of a vast flowing fountain of grace that washes away ALL our sins.

So, what should we do when we fall? John admonishes us to confess our sins to Jesus—who promises to forgive and purify. We simply need to trust in His faithfulness and take His promise at its word.



PRAYER POINTS:

1. Using Psalm 139:33-34 as your prayer, ask God to help reveal your current sinful behavior.
2. Acknowledge and confess these sins, asking for Christ's forgiveness.
3. Give thanks for His faithfulness and celebrate the purity He restores through His shed blood.