Week 1: Return to your First Love

Day 1 Remember His Love
Remember the first time you were in love? That person who you were in love with filled your days and your mind. You wanted to be with them, to talk with them, to be close enough to hear them breathe. Is your love for God like that? Are you eager for time with Him in prayer? Do you lose track of time when you are with Him in worship? If your answer is “no” you need revival, friend.

God loves us and wants that kind of relationship with us. During this first week of prayer we will gaze at the great love God’s has for us. May our love for Him be rekindled as we do so for We love Him because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

Has there ever been a time when you understood God’s love for you greater than you do now? The Ephesian church was told in Revelation: “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” Revelation 2:4-7 (emphasis added)

Ask the Lord to remind you of His love for you and for His church. Remember that time you knew at the very depth of your soul that God loved you. Wait there in that memory. Nothing has changed in His love for you. How precious you are to Him!

Day 2 How He Shows His Love
How we struggle to open up and let the other person know we love them! Teen-agers may ask a friend to ask a friend if the target of their affections “likes” him or her. Sadly, communicating
love doesn’t always get easier as we get older. An anniversary gift of a vacuum cleaner may mean deep love to its sender, but the recipient may not quite see it that way. Love can be hard to communicate. But God, perfect Communicator that He is, sent His Son as the Word to tell us and show us that love.

*God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John 4:9-10

Plead with Him to give you the power to grasp the depth of His unfathomable love for you individually and for His people. Ask the Lord to show you how He has been loving you through people, provision and protection spiritually and physically. Where would we be without the love of God in our lives?

**Day 3 Unimaginable Love**

Your child…your favorite child… your perfect child… your only child is not taken from you, but sent by you, to suffer. He is to receive the bone-wrenching, life-killing punishment, not of your dearest friend, but of your worst enemy, of the terrorists who would just as soon kill you as look at you. Look your child in the eyes and tell him there is no other way, that this is the plan, that this has been the plan from the beginning of time. Tell him you are doing it because you love those in rebellion against you. Look in his eyes. What do you see? Inexplicably there is understanding in those eyes and a look, not of terror or fear or reservation or sadness, but of joy! *(for the joy set before Him He endured the cross* Hebrews 12:2). How much must you love those enemies that your love for them has spread to your Son who is joyful to suffer for them! *(while we were still enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.* Romans 5:10).

Jesus looked through the cross and saw you, His joy, on the other side. He knew it meant His flesh would be torn, His reputation dragged through the mud, His relationship with His Father questioned. He knew it meant His death. And He did it anyway because He loves you. *God made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* 2 Corinthians 5:21

Spend time in praise and thanksgiving for God’s great love for you. Sit in your Father’s lap and allow His love to wash over you, His love that loves you more than His own Son.

**Day 4 Enemies**

We were enemies, God and us. We were in rebellion against our Creator, fighting against Him, obeying the commands of our own enslaving gods: self, power, convenience, money, ease; hating others and being hated by them. Suffering had no purpose. Our prayers didn’t go any higher than the ceiling. We were at war with an all-powerful God of wrath and judgment in a relationship broken beyond our repair. *But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*
He poured out this Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by His grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. Titus 3: 4-7

We were enemies, yet He loved us. Taking the blood of His Perfect Son in exchange for ours, He made it possible for us to have relationship with Him. Not just so we could be acquaintances that tolerate one another or that tolerate each other during family gatherings, but so He could be so close as to actually live in us, permanently. How’s that for love?!

Pause and remember where you were before you knew Christ, where you were without His love. Ask the Lord to show you the impossible situation you were in without Him. What would be different in your life if Christ had not died and reconciled you to God? Where would you be without God’s guidance? Worship Him with gratitude. Give Him praise and thanks for rescuing you out of enemy territory. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice that paid the ransom for you to be released from death into life. Pray that your love for Him would grow in strength and power and understanding.

Day 5 Prove it!
As children we all had those double-dog-dare-you moments when we had to prove something to someone, or at least it seemed that way. For some reason, whatever it was we were trying to prove always required doing something foolish and often dangerous or potentially embarrassing. But to prove our bravery or prowess or whatever, we put our tongue on the frozen flagpole, so to speak, sometimes proving our point, but often just proving our foolishness.

As adults we still have things to prove. Proving our love can be the most difficult, but we do so every day by cleaning up after messy children, by working to provide for family, by giving time for a friend in need of advice, by taking out the trash or cooking dinner, or going to a funeral. And occasionally we show love with the ultimate sacrifice: by giving our lives. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

What about God? How does God prove He loves us? God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Romans 5:8

God has proven His love for you. Have you proven your love for Him? If you were put on trial for loving God, what evidence would be bought to reveal that you love God? If you dare, ask your spouse or your children if they think you love God and how they know it. Ask the Lord to show you how to love Him with greater love today.

Day 6 The End of Love
God’s love has an end. Not in the sense of a beginning and end, but in the sense of result. Good things happen when He loves us. His love is a transforming love. It changes everything. He loves us so that.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 Read the verse aloud. Now take
out the words “the world” and “everyone” and replace them with your name. Read it aloud again:  
_For God loved __________ in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that if __________ believes in Him (s)he will not perish, but will have eternal life._ GOD loves you... _so that_ you could believe in Him, _so that_ you would not perish... _so that_ you would have eternal life knowing Him.

The end of God’s love is to give us life, eternal life, which Jesus defines this way: _And this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ._ John 17:3 Eternal life knowing God and His Son - that is the end. He loves us, endured the cross for us, all so we could know Him.

Look at this verse as if you are seeing it for the first time. What kind of love is this that sacrifices so deeply, that forgives accusers from a cross, that welcomes enemies and dies to do so? Such a love is worthy of our love in return.

Commit to show God your love for Him today. How do you start? Show love to others: _I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me._ Matthew 25:40 Feed the poor today. Visit a widow or someone in the hospital. Share what you have with someone who has less. Because God loves you.

**Day 7 Loving God**
Sacrifice. Crucifixion. Death. As we have focused on God’s love for us, His sacrifice and His purpose in that sacrifice, we want to love Him back. _We love because He first loved us._ 1 John 4:19 He endured the cross for us, what can we be or do for Him? He gives us the answer: _If you love Me, you will keep My commands._ John 14:15 Love is active. If we love Him we will do what He says. We will obey.

So what are these commands? And _He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command._ Matthew 22:37-38) If we really want to show God our love with our obedience, it will mean surrender of all of who we are.

It will take all of our heart: our emotions, our feelings, our desires will all belong to Him. What He wants will be what we want. It will take all of our soul: all of our being, all of this eternal part of us will be so focused on Him that whatever pain we receive here will be considered light and momentary because of the glory that will be. (2 Corinthians 4:17) It will also take all of our mind to love Him: every thought, every idea, every choice surrendered, not just committed to Him, but truly under His authority. It takes all this – and more- to comprehend His astronomical, measureless, unbounded love for us.

Do you love Him with all your heart, soul and mind? If not, ask Him to fill you with that kind of love for Him. Then watch to see Him transform your heart and soul and mind and, as a result, your life and His Kingdom.
Sit a moment with the Lord. Listen to His heart. This God who carved the mountains and who
dug the seas, who created the fiery sun and the grains of sand loves you. Do not be afraid.
There is no fear in love. Kneel in surrender. Trust and love Him by obeying His commands.

**Jesus answered, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. The one who doesn’t love Me will not keep My words.”** John 14:23-24a

**Week 2: Repent of any Sins**

**Day 8 Proper view of sin**

How serious is sin? Is it just missing the mark or is it living in rebellion against a holy and
righteous King? Sin is high treason in God’s eyes. When we choose our way instead of God’s
way we shove Him off the throne of our lives and sit in it ourselves.

This week we will look at our wicked ways from which God calls us. This is not going to be a
pleasant week in some ways, but it is necessary. As long as we cherish sin in our hearts, God is
under no obligation to hear our prayers. If He will not hear our prayers, we will not be revived
and our nation will continue under His judgment.

As you pray this week ask the Lord to reveal sin. When He does, agree with Him about its evil,
confessing it by name (not just, “I have failed Lord.” But “I have failed by responding in anger
instead of love”) then repent: turn and run the other direction.

Have you any controversies with God? Is there anything God says is wrong that you say is “not
so bad.” Do not struggle with God over the virtues of something the Righteous Judge says is
wrong. As long as you disagree with God, your relationship with Him will not grow any further
and you invite His discipline in your life.

Confession and repentance of sin is personal. It is something we must do on our own regardless
of what other believers do or don’t do. This is between you and God. So humble yourself and
pray and seek His face and turn from your wicked ways. Then watch to see what God does in
response and how your relationship with Him.

Set your watch for five minutes. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any sin in your life: sin upward
(against God), outward (against others), inward (against yourself), things you have done you
should not have, and things you have not done that you should. Use **Psalm 51** to guide you
through this prayer time. Trust the Lord to bring them to mind. Wait on Him to do so. Do not
rush this. Confess them and forsake them. Don’t forget to follow the confession with
repentance.

When the five minutes are up, or when you are certain God has shown you all He will show you
today, then trust in this promise of God: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 John 1:9 and rejoice in the
love of God that makes a way for forgiveness! Come back each day to this exercise in
confession so it becomes a habit.

Day 9 Lack of gratitude
*Enter His gates with thanksgiving.* Psalm 100:4
*Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love endures forever.* 1 Chronicles 16:34
*Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.* 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Over 100 times we are commanded in scripture to give thanks to God. He tells us to approach
Him with thanks on our lips and in our hearts. It’s not hard to do. It’s not costly in money, time
or energy. Yet, how often do we follow this repeated command?

If all you had today was what you had thanked God for yesterday, what would you have? Would
you be reading this in the comfort of your climate-controlled home? Would you have clothes
on? How patient God is in His love, that He gives us so much when we do not even pause to say
thank you.

Let this be a day of thanksgiving in your life. Instead of asking God, thank Him for what He has
already done for you. Express gratitude to God in your prayer, to your family in your talk, to
your co-workers, teachers, and even your pastor. Watch your life change from self-focus to
other-focus and your heart soften to the things of the Lord. Gratitude kills pride and enables
humility to flourish.

Day 10 Pride and Humility
*If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves...* 1 Chronicles 7:14a

*Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not
consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead He
emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He
had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the
point of death—even to death on a cross.* Philippians 2:5-8

*God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.* James 4:6

As believers, we have been brought out of the enemy’s camp into the Kingdom of God. Yet
there are times God will resist us: when pride takes root. Pride disguises itself in a number of
forms:

- Self-pity – *This should not be happening to me! I don’t deserve this.*
- False humility – *I’m not good enough for God to forgive me.*
- Too high standards - *Even if God forgives me, I can’t forgive myself.*
- Stubbornness – *Sure the Bible says that, but that’s not really what God wants.*
- Unforgiveness – *They don’t deserve my forgiveness!*

Examine yourself to see if pride is a sin you need to confess and repent of. Do you hesitate to
submit to leaders and God-given authorities? Do you allow feelings of inferiority to decide what
you do or does God’s Word and direction guide you? Do you take credit or give glory to God for what He does through you?

Choose humility...or you will find the Lord of Hosts resisting you at every turn. Let your attitude be the same as that of Christ...and watch to see God pour grace upon grace upon you!

Trees and vines bear fruit. It is in their nature to do so. If an apple tree doesn’t have apples on it in the summer, the tree has a problem. It is in the nature of a Christian to bear fruit as well, fruit that grows: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.* Galatians 5:22-23

There is judgment for those who do not bear fruit: *Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* Matthew 7:19 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. John 15:1-2

Are you bearing fruit? Do you love God and others more today than last year? Is kindness becoming more a part of who you are? Is it easier to have faith and trust God? Are you able to say no to temptations? Does flying off the handle characterize you or does gentleness?

If you are not bearing fruit, surrender to the Keeper of the vineyard. Give Him your life. Trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to rescue you from sin and enable fruit-bearing in your life. Sacrifice to Him the unfruitful areas in your life for pruning so He can produce more fruit in your life. Go and bear fruit.

**Day 12 Materialism and Idolatry**

Statistics show that 80% of evangelical wealth worldwide is in North America where the average Christian “tithes” only 2.5%. If every evangelical actually tithed 10% there would be over $165 billion more to spend on missions and reaching the world for Christ.

In the kingdom of heaven money is a small thing (remember, they pave the streets with it in heaven). God gives us minor things, like money, as a test to see if we will be faithful with eternal treasures.

*No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.* Matthew 7:24

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Matthew 7:21

Do you rob God by withholding your time, talents or finances from Him? Do you give at least ten percent of your income to God’s work? Are you faithful to support your church and missions both financially and with prayer? Do you waste time? Do you waste the time of others? Turn from any wicked ways God has revealed and repent.
Day 13 False conversions

We were once enemies of God, with no relationship. The sin we commit and that we were born into offends a holy, righteous God in whom is no shadow. He is pure and can tolerate no impurity or sin in His presence. Yet when we share the Gospel with the lost, we make it about geography (Where will you go when you die?) or about saying the right words (Just pray this prayer...) rather than about surrendering our lives to our eternal King. The result is that on an average Sunday morning over half of the people on our church rolls are not there and they haven’t been in church in years. We do not even know where they are.

By accepting and encouraging their belief that they are “Christians” even though there is no evidence in their lives, we have effectively inoculated them against the Gospel. They think they are saved because they prayed a prayer or walked an aisle, but they are still lost.

Plead with the Lord to forgive us of our sin of false conversions and ask Him to soften their hearts so they will receive the truth of the Gospel. Ask Him to give us words that speak truth in love, that unapologetically call for surrender to a holy and just and merciful God, abandoning the kingdom of darkness and to be carried into the Kingdom of Light.

Day 14 Call to Holiness

God calls us to holiness: **But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. 1 Peter 1: 15-16; Leviticus 19:2**

We are to be a peculiar people, set apart. There is a difference between us and the world we live in. We are in it, but not of it. Think about Jesus. He stood out in a crowd. There was a difference in His life and in those of His disciples. No one mistook them for everyday Joes. Even at night, in the dark, Peter was recognized by a simple servant girl as having been with Jesus. **Being with Jesus changes you.** We cannot be God’s children and still act like the world. **Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world’s friend becomes God’s enemy. James 4:4**

Are you set apart? Are you different from the unbelievers you work with or go to school with? When someone insults you, do you respond in kindness and concern for them or do you defend yourself? Are you Christ-like in your business dealings? Does your style of dress please the fashionistas of the world or the Lord? Do you spend daily time in prayer and meditation on the Scriptures or watching TV? Do you fear God or people? Do you love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength or do you love yourself first?

Lift up holy hands in prayer today asking God to set you apart, to make you different, to make you like Jesus for the world around you so they can clearly hear the message of Christ by what you say, by what you do, and by who you are.
Week 3: Restore Broken Relationships

Day 15 The Primary Relationship
The essence of the Good News of Jesus Christ is that there is a way for us to have relationship with a holy, righteous God. On top of that, the relationship is not just a nodding, tip-of-the-hat acquaintance, but an actual Father-child relationship, one where we get adopted into His family, where we share in the inheritance of Jesus Himself! When we become Christians, we are not just rescued from our own mistaken and sinful ways, we are brought into God’s family.

An adopted child in Roman times was different from a natural child. Roman law permitted the disowning of a naturally-born son or daughter, but an adoption was permanent. One could never disinherit or disown an adopted child. Our relationship with God is like that. Once adopted into His family we can never lose that relationship. There is nothing we did to get into the relationship, any more than an adopted child today does anything to get adopted into his family, and there is nothing we can do to get out of it.

Today consider:
1. Do you have a relationship with God? Have you been adopted into His family? If not, stop reading any further. Repent of living life your own way and surrender your life to Him.
2. Have you been counting on what you do (if I do good, God will like me) or have you been counting on what God has done for you (the death and resurrection of His Son) to gain relationship with God? It is only through Christ that relationship with God is possible.

Praise God for making a way where there was no way. Thank God for your relationship with Him. Thank Him for adopting you into His family. Look for someone around you who needs to be adopted by God. Let them know how.

Day 16 Hindered Relationship
God hates sin. He hates sin because sin destroys. Take a healthy, loving relationship and throw sin into it. The result: Demolition. Sin in our lives separates us from our holy God and Heavenly Father: *But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide His face from you so that He does not listen.* Isaiah 59:2

If we sin, we are still a part of His family because we are permanently adopted. But when we sin, barriers go up between us and God. We sense our prayers go no higher than the ceiling, barriers then arise between us and church family, and often among physical family members as well. Why continue on this path? *What fruit was produced from the things you are now ashamed of?* Romans 6:21

If you want full fellowship with God and His family, we must change our mind about our pet sins. We must stop defending them as “not that bad” and see them for the evil, separating things they are. Confess them; agree with God that they are evil and run in the other direction toward the things of God. You will find an intimate relationship there you had never thought possible!
Take time now to ask the Lord to:
1) Reveal sin in your life. What is the one thing in your life that keeps you from intimate relationship with Him?
2) Forgive you for that sin; to take it and cast it as far as the east is from the west.
3) Remove sin from your life. Allow the Great Physician to Surgically remove this sin, cutting out even the root from which it has grown.
4) Replace the sin with thoughts, actions and attitudes that are pleasing to the Lord, that will draw you closer to Him, make you more like him, and produce fruit that results in sanctification.

Take time for this four-step process daily at the beginning of your Quiet Time with the Lord. You will be able to hear Him more clearly and know His love more surely when your ears and your heart are clean before Him. ...turn from your wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven...

Day 17 Relationship in Family
Our most tender relationships are with those we love the most: family. God gives us very specific instructions regarding how to treat family members because this is our most treasured earthly relationship. “Honor your father and mother.” “To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.” “Children, obey your parents.” Living the Christian life with family is perhaps the hardest place of all. There are so many expectations and we are so weak. However, the family is the critical place for coming to know Christ and for discipling. Because of this, families are significant targets of harassment by the enemy (as you can see by the divorce rate among Christians).

Ask the Lord to show you how to guard your family spiritually and physically. Is there someone in your home you need to ask forgiveness of? Is there someone you need to forgive?

If God reveals sin in your family relationships, don’t let today pass without confessing your sin and asking forgiveness of your family members. These 28 days are dealing with revival. Refusing to confess sin and make relationships right will simply harden your heart and take you farther from revival. It will also hinder revival in your family and church. Do not harden your heart when God reveals sin in your life. Respond instead.

Day 18 Relationships at Church
So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. You also are being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

The people in your church are like a building being joined together by Christ. Imagine what kind of building you would have if, say, the floors didn’t like the walls and avoided each other, or the doors didn’t trust their lintels? Or the chairs didn’t like the color of carpet and wouldn’t sit on it. What a chaotic building that would be! Church can be like that sometimes. Members
disagree, they avoid each other, they don’t trust one another, they allow personal preference to divide them. They harbor unforgiveness or disappointment or self-pity and it interferes with building the church. They don’t function as a body of believers any more than the chaotic building above could provide shelter in a storm.

Check yourself with these verses about how we are to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. If you find yourself disobedient, follow the confession steps at the end of Day 17.

- **No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.** Ephesians 4:29
- **Love one another.** John 13:14 (and over ten other times in Scripture)
- **Be at peace with one another.** Mark 9:50
- **Always pursue what is good for one another and for all.** 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- **Show family affection to one another with brotherly love.** Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10
- **Be in agreement with one another.** Romans 12:16
- **Let us no longer criticize one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in your brother’s way.** Romans 14:13
- **Live in harmony with another.** Romans 15:5
- **Accept one another just as the Messiah also accepted you.** Romans 15:7
- **Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.** James 5:16
- **Serve one another through love.** Galatians 5:13
- **Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.** Galatians 6:2
- **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.** Ephesians 4:32
- **If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.** John 13:14

How did you do? How would your fellow church members say you do? Choose one of these to focus on fulfilling in your church this week.

**Day 19 Unforgiveness**

 Probably the most prevalent, damaging sin in the church today is unforgiveness. We hold grudges. We remember painful things people did to us decades or even generations ago. We sheath these offenses like swords on our belts, ready to pull them out and wield them in case that person sins against us again. The Father tells us: **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God also forgave you in Christ.** Ephesians 4:32 **Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.** Colossians 3:13 How then, does God forgive us? Measure your forgiveness by that of God who says:

- **For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.** Hebrews 8:12
- **It is I who sweep away your transgressions for My own sake and remember your sins no more.** Isaiah 43:24b-25
- **As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.** Psalm 103:12
You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19

God makes a choice about the sin we confess: He refuses to remember it. Once He forgives, it is as if it never happened. He sweeps it away like a dish we dropped on the floor and broke. It is thrown into the depths of the ocean to be consumed or buried, but never to wash ashore. Note that the things God is forgiving are bad things, sometimes horrific sins. From the cross Jesus says, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34

However there is a condition to our receiving forgiveness. God also says, If you don’t forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your wrong doing. Mark 11:26 (see also Matthew 6:14-15)

In the strongest possible terms, let me urge you to take those offenses, those hurts that you hold on to and choose to remember them no more. Refuse to allow them place in your life and forgive the person who has sinned against you. You don’t have to wait for them to ask you to forgive. (Jesus forgave His persecutors from the cross, in the very midst of suffering). Your forgiveness isn’t based on what they did to you, but on what Jesus has done for us by forgiving us our sin.

Who has God brought to mind that you need to forgive? Children? Parents? Political parties? Governments? God? Fellow church members? Choose to remember no more. Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how many times could my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus said to him, “but 70 times seven.” Matthew 18:21-22

1) Forgiveness is fully releasing another from the debt of the offense.
2) Forgiveness is a command, not an option.
3) You cannot forgive and love in your own strength. The Holy Spirit of Christ can enable you to forgive and love. Ask Him for help.
4) Forgiveness is a choice of your will, not the result of a feeling. You must choose to forgive.
5) The person who forgives is the one who has to pay the price of forgiveness. Jesus paid the price for you.
6) You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive and show grace and mercy. Being offended provides you with the invitation to reveal Christ to the offender by your forgiveness.
7) Forgiveness does not mean the offense was not wrong.
8) Forgiveness is not permission for the offender to do it again.
9) Forgiveness does not mean you will fully forget. You choose not to hold the offense against the person any longer. If the memories return and you start to hold on to the offense again, forgive again.
10) How much do you forgive? Seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21-22). In other words, forgive an unlimited number of times.
11) Even if the offender really doesn’t repent and change his ways, you still forgive.
12) Even if the person doesn’t believe he is wrong, forgive. Jesus set the model for us on the cross when He prayed for those who were killing him: “Father, forgive them.” (Luke 23:34)
13) In Mark 11:25 Jesus didn’t require you to go to the person to forgive. You can do that as you pray.*
*This list is taken from Consecrate the People by Claude King.

Day 20 Fear God
It has been said there are two kinds of people: Those who fear God and those who fear everyone else. When asked why America has not experienced revival despite the huge groundswell of prayer over the last 25 years, Henry Blackaby said, “We do not fear God. Our pastors do not tremble at God’s Word.”

For the unbeliever, there is a fear of God’s wrath and judgment. For the believer there is fear of God’s discipline, of the Consuming Fire that our God is.

- The Hebrew midwives, however, feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. Exodus 1:17
- Above all, fear the Lord and worship Him faithfully with all your heart; consider the great things He has done for you. 1 Samuel 12:24
- To fear the Lord is to hate evil. Proverbs 8:13
- Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor. 1 Peter 2:17
- I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and trembles at my word. Isaiah 66:2
- My heart is broken within me, and all my bones tremble. I have become like a drunkard, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Lord, because of His holy words. Jeremiah 23:9
- Now the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him— those who depend on His faithful love. Psalm 33:18

So which kind of person are you? Do you fear God or man? Do you hesitate to love the unlovable because of what people might think? Do you keep quiet when you know God wants you to speak because you might lose friendships or a job? When you read in the Scriptures about the wrath of God or the holiness of God, do you tremble? Does the possibility of God’s discipline keep you from sin?

As you pray today, ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you. See His power, the absolute authority of this God who utters His voice and the earth melts. Psalm 46:6 Let it wash over you. Fear the Lord. Serve Him only. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His faithful love toward those who fear Him. Psalm 103:11

Day 21 Offense
We are surrounded by offended people. Democrats are offended by Republicans. Republicans are offended by the media. Race and gender divide our nation. Teenagers roll their eyes at what they deem as offensive (and offended) parents. Families split over emotional injuries. Church members take sides.

Why all this offense? People are offensive because people are easily offended. Even Jesus offended people! But there is no place in God’s Kingdom for pride and it is only when we have pride that we get offended. If we think of ourselves as servants, then there is no offense in
being treated like one. However, if we think of ourselves as masters of our fate, as rulers over ourselves, we set ourselves up to be offended.

Scripture gives us clear instruction on what to do when we are offended:  

If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he won’t listen, take one or two more with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you. Matthew 18:15-17

Sometimes people won’t attempt to follow these verses because “they won’t work.” They are right in the sense the plan laid out here may not “work.” People may not respond as we would like. Jesus acknowledged that in the final verse. Yet even though it may not “work,” it is still the process Christ Himself gave us. We still must obey.

If you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

If you have caused offense and have not reconciled, your offering and your worship are not acceptable to a holy God. You need to go to the person offended and seek reconciliation. God is more concerned with your reconciliation with others than with receiving worship from you. It’s like someone who borrows your car, wrecks it, and then points out that they washed the windshield for you. The clean windshield is great, but there is a much bigger problem that needs to be corrected before you can appreciate the shine on the window.

In seeking reconciliation, go through the eight steps (from Consecrate the People by Claude King) below:
1) Pray and ask God for help in thorough repentance.
2) Go to make things right in humility and obedience to God.
3) Confess your sin to God and to those directly affected by the sin.
4) Don’t apologize. Ask for forgiveness.
5) Go in person if at all possible. Talk face-to-face.
6) Don’t reflect negatively on the other person or his actions or attitudes. Deal only with your part of the offense. Make no excuses.
7) Make restitution when appropriate.
8) If you do not receive a positive response, continue to pray for and seek reconciliation with the unforgiving person.
Week 4: Recommitment to Christ

Day 22 Remain
For this last week of *Sound the Alarm* prayer, search your heart and mind for areas not totally committed to Him.

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. *Remain in Me,* and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it *remains* on the vine, so neither can you unless you *remain* in Me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who *remains* in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. If anyone does not *remain* in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you *remain* in Me and My words *remain* in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. *Remain* in My love. If you keep My commands you will *remain* in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and *remain* in His love.” John 15:1-10 (emphasis added)

Relationship with Jesus is essential to living the Christian life. It simply cannot be done without Him. Knowing that, Jesus calls us to remain in Him. Grapevine branches don’t just hop on and off a vine at will. In the same way we can’t be “committed” to Christ one day, follow our own selfish desires the next and expect Christ to produce good fruit in our lives. A branch is part of the vine and cannot alter that fact without withering. Remaining in Christ is vital to life.

Verse 5 above tells us we can do nothing without Jesus. Nothing. It’s not that we can do a little bit or that things don’t go as well. We can do absolutely nothing without Him. Connected, remaining, abiding in Him we grow. Disconnected we die.

How are you at abiding in Him? Pray through the verses from John 15 asking the Lord to show you if you are abiding, resting in Him, holding tight to Him, totally dependent on Him. Are you connected? If not, confess your independence and surrender completely and wholeheartedly to Him. What would need to change in your life for you to remain in the vine of Christ? *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.* James 4:8

Day 23 Where shall we go?
*From that moment many of His disciples turned back and no longer accompanied Him. Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?” Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!”* John 6:66-68

The Christian life is often hard and sometimes illogical. There are some very difficult teachings in it, as the one that prompted the above exchange. (Jesus had told his followers they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood and some of them left because of it).
During these four weeks of prayer for revival, you have been challenged to surrender yourself to the Lordship of Christ over and over. Some of the things you were prompted to do run totally counter to our culture: Surrender. Be dependent on God rather than independent. Forgive people even if they don’t ask for it and don’t deserve it. Take time each day to let God love you and reveal Himself to you. These are not things honored in today’s world.

But eternal life is found only in Christ. There is nowhere else we can go if we want relationship with God. He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6)

So humble yourself and pray and seek God’s face. Turn from your wicked, independent ways. Take up your cross and follow Him. Wherever He leads, go. There is no one else with the words of life. There is no one else who can revive us and rescue us. Let God use the hard things in your life to fashion you to be more like Him. Accept the confusing things with faith, asking in prayer for clarity. Purpose, as the disciples did, to stay committed to Christ even if it means death.

**Day 24 Be filled by the Spirit.**

Going to the gas station, I pulled up to the pump, put the nozzle into the tank, slid my credit card, pushed the button on the pump and listened to the clickety, clickety, click of the numbers rapidly spinning. After a few minutes the pump clanked off. My gas tank was full. Within a week, however, I needed to fill it up again. So it’s back to the gas station.

Suppose this time I decided that gasoline was too expensive and decided to fill my gas tank with water instead. How well would that work? It would fill my tank, but it wouldn’t fuel my engine. Instead I wouldn’t get out of the parking lot and would find my car’s engine destroyed. The Bible says: **be filled by the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18** What if I fill up with something besides the Spirit - with self or pride or sports or power? It would be just as destructive to my soul as water in my gas tank is to my car. Yet, we must be filled. If we aren’t filled with the Spirit, we are filled with something else - a something else that is not going to bring about the same choices as the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says: **be filled by the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18** Are you? Are you filled by the Spirit or is there something else in you? Empty yourself from the top of your head to the tips of your toes from self, from self-will, from your own plans and purposes. Let it drain out of you until it’s just a puddle on the floor. Then ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit. Let the Spirit flood in, overflowing in your heart, mind and soul so there is no room for anything else.

To know God, His Love, His will, what He wants us to do, we must be filled with the Spirit. And just like our cars that need to be filled up periodically, we need daily – and sometimes moment by moment - refilling of God.
What an amazing thing that the very Spirit of God would come not just to visit, but to dwell in us! That He would share the thoughts and purposes of the Father with us! Ask Him to fill you pressed down and overflowing!

Day 25 Keep Commandments
We are new citizens of God’s country. We have been brought from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. We have a new King, a new set of laws, new expectations made of us. What happens when we try to bring the old way of doing things into this new Kingdom? It does not work; they do not fit. “If you love Me, you will keep My commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” John 14:15-16

The old country, where Self ruled, required us to be first, to do nothing without considering its effects on us, to protect ourselves and love ourselves. But this new Kingdom has different commandments. This as week you consider recommitting your life to Christ and His Kingdom, check these commandments that you are committing to as well:

- But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Matthew 6:33
- Sitting down, He called the Twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” Mark 9:35
- You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. Matthew 5:11-12
- Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself. Leviticus 19:18
- This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers. 1 John 3:16

These are but a sample of the rules for the new Kingdom. Of course there are many more commands as well. Read the rulebook (the Bible). Be aware of your new citizenship in God’s Kingdom on earth and the rules of living here. These are the laws you have surrendered to when you surrendered to Christ. Keep them close and obey them.

Day 26 Surrender
Don’t collect for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Surrender (verb): to give oneself up, as into the power of another; submit or yield.
Have you surrendered to the King:

- Your time
- Your money
- Your family
- Your home
- Your clothes
• Your food
• Your old-age
• Your car
• Your health
• Your television
• Your computer
• Your cell phone
• Your convenience
• Your comfort
• Your music
• Your worship style
• Your friends
• Your church
• Your health
• Your fertility
• Your security
• Your preferences
• Your rights
• Your pets
• Your job
• Your lifestyle
• Your place of residence
• Your life

God’s Kingdom does not have off-shore banks where you can keep things you don’t want the King to know about. He knows what you are holding onto. Give it to Him. All of it! In exchange, He will give you treasure in heaven that no one can take from you, that never grows old or depreciates in value: True treasure.

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”  --Jim Elliot

Independence. Every Fourth of July we celebrate it as a nation remembering our freedom from England. But as God’s people, we daily celebrate dependence on a God who will never leave us. God delights in our dependence on Him because it means we trust Him, we recognize He is trustworthy.

What made Peter sink in the waves or lie to a servant girl, or the children of Israel turn their backs on the promised land, or the disciples go into hiding? Why depend on our own fallible selves when we have a loving, perfect, infallible, all-powerful God to trust? Fear. What gets rid of fear? Knowing the love of God. There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love. 1 John 4:18

How dependent are you on God? If suddenly God cut off relationship with you, would you notice? If He refused to hear your prayers or direct you, would your life be different? Or to
think of it another way, if you took back the throne of your life and just looked to God when it was convenient, or for the really hard decisions, would your life be any different?

Examine your schedule for the day, week, month. What are you doing that is dependent on God? Is there anything you are doing that is beyond your own strength, talent or ability or is it all dependent on you? What is it that God wants you to do that you are hesitating about because of fear? Repent. Trust that a loving God will call you to do what is good and right and best. Go out on God’s limb with Him. There is no safer place to be.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths.* Proverbs 3:5-6

**Day 28 Renew God’s covenant with you/ Your covenant with God**

In medieval times it was dangerous to be on your own. You needed a lord or king to protect you, a castle to run to in case of invasion. When a person put himself under the protection of the king and became his subject, he would kneel before the king, clasp his hands together and place them in the king’s open hands, symbolically placing himself and all he had under the king’s authority. Our current tradition of folding hands in prayer comes from this ceremony.

If during these four weeks of prayer you have found that you have drifted from your first love, that you are living life by your standards and rules rather than those of the Kingdom, that there are things He is calling you to that you are refusing out of fear or desire to control, know this: God invites you to return, kneel before Him, place your hands in His, and renew your promises to Him. *Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive.* Isaiah 55:7

*Return to Me…and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts.* Zechariah 1:3

Pray about the dependent life you are giving to Him, of obeying the commandments, especially of loving the Lord, of total surrender, of forgiving, of growing in relationship with God and others. Consecrate yourself to be holy, putting to death your old sinful life and putting on Christ. Commit to seeking God’s Kingdom purposes first, of giving all to Him and refusing to hold on to anything He asks for. Covenant to obey His commands including those regarding making disciples.

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This may be the last day of prayer in this study, but if you are serious about renewing your commitment with God, this will not be the last of your daily times with God. Commit to read through the Bible, praying for God to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways to you each day. Reflect at the end of the day on what God has done in your life. Ask your pastor or Sunday School teacher for suggestions for daily study.
Do not neglect your relationship with the Lord. He is worthy of every act, every word of devotion you can muster: Our Lord and God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because You have created all things, and because of Your will they exist and were created. The Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing! Revelation 4:11, 5:12

That relationship with Him is precious beyond measure, a shelter in storm, a foundation when all else around you is shaken, the hand of protection and rescue. God promises:

   Because he is lovingly devoted to Me,
   I will deliver him;
   I will protect him because he knows My name.
   When he calls out to Me, I will answer him;
   I will be with him in trouble.
   I will rescue him and give him honor.
   I will satisfy him with a long life
   and show him My salvation. Psalm 91:14-16

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14
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