

West Houston SDA Church 40 Days of Prayer

Themes:

1. Repentance and Total Surrender
2. Spiritual Growth
3. Witnessing/ Evangelism
4. Personal Needs

Day 8: Doing the Impossible

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mathew 5:43-45).

Do you find it easy to do good to people who hate you? What about praying for people who despise you? And if we say that we love our enemies, what type of love do we give them? Scripture is clear, love should be “without hypocrisy” (Romans 12:9). So, if we say that we love others, it should be true love. Usually, people love their family members and close friends. But when it comes to loving an enemy, that requires God’s grace beyond measure. God wants us to love the ones we find impossible to love. How? He enables us if we let Him.

How can we express love without hypocrisy, whether to God or to humans? Share with your prayer partner a time when you experienced love without hypocrisy. Pray for grace to love difficult people, including your enemies.

Day 9: More than the Name

“The mere hearing of sermons Sabbath after Sabbath, the reading of the Bible through and through, or the explanation of it verse by verse, will not benefit us or those who hear us, unless we bring the truths of the Bible into our individual experience. The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the control of the Word of God. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit, the precepts of the Word will become the principles of the life.” (Ministries of Healing, p. 514).

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Over and over, the Word of God calls us to be real with Him. It also tells us how to do it. Submitting our lives to God is the only way to be the kind of Christians God wants us to be. When we do, others see the goodness of God in us. Pray for grace to be a true Christian.

Day 10: Ever Present Help

In the last nine days we have been reading and discussing repentance and total surrender to God. We need God to help us every minute of our lives. That is why God gave us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Without Him, we cannot love God. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we cannot love others, let alone our enemies. Thus, we need the Helper every day of our lives. “For the daily baptism of the Spirit, every worker should offer his petition to God” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51). For us to receive the Holy Spirit, we need to surrender ourselves fully to the Lord. God is willing to “forgive us all our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Nothing is too hard for God.

Let us pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Growth

Day 11: Spiritual Growth is Expected

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14). We need to learn the truth of the Bible and allow that truth to change us.

God does not expect people to accept Jesus as their Savior, then remain spiritual babies. No parent desires such! We start with simple Bible concepts. However, we should continue learning, sharing our testimonies, and teaching others. Pray for spiritual growth.

Day 12: More of Spiritual Growth

What does spiritual growth look like?

Being more like Jesus entails spiritual growth.

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8).

When we have spiritual maturity, we reflect the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23).

Do I reflect the fruit of the Spirit in my daily life? This is a personal question for each one of us. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Pray for God’s grace to yield to the entreating of the Holy Spirit.

Day 13: The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Growth

Our connection with the Savior grows us spiritually.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:5,7-8).

When we give our lives to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we enter into a loving relationship with Him. As a result, His Word abides in us; we obey Him, by His grace to His glory. In that relationship, the Lord promises to grant our requests in prayer. And what better things can we ask from God? Pray to abide in Christ.

14: The Blessed Word and Spiritual Growth

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Indeed, the Word of God trains us in righteousness. The process of “reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness” by the Word of God leads us through spiritual growth. From Scripture we learn God’s revealed will. The Word is a blessing beyond words. God has provided for us everything we need to grow to be like Him. Let us, prayerfully, study the Word daily. Pray for grace to study the Word.

Day 15: The Good Desire

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:1-3).

If indeed we desire to be like Jesus, we must lay aside all the evils listed above. God gives us the command and the power to fulfill it, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). A keen desire for the Word of God and obedience are necessary in spiritual growth.

Pray for grace to obey the Word.

Day 16: Growing in Spiritual Wisdom

In His mercy, God guides us on how to get real wisdom. We read,

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9,10).

Look at these words, “walking worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.” Shouldn’t that be the desire of every Christian? And how does one reach the level of pleasing God? Being “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Pray for God’s wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Day 17: Helping Others and Spiritual Growth

“In place of growing anxious with the thought that you are not growing in grace, just do every duty that presents itself, carry the burden of souls on your heart, and by every conceivable means seek to save the lost. Be kind, be courteous, be pitiful; speak in humility of the blessed hope; talk of the love of Jesus; tell of His goodness, His mercy, and His righteousness; and cease to worry as to whether or not you are growing. Plants do not grow through any conscious effort.... The plant is not in continual worriment about its growth; it just grows under the supervision of God.” (The Signs of the Times, February 3, 1898). Indeed, the process of reaching others for God helps us grow spiritually.

Furthermore, when Jesus was on earth as a human, he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man,” (Luke 2:52). Our perfect example, Jesus Christ, grew not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually. Hence, He always did the will of His father. Pray for grace to emulate Jesus.

Day 18: The Journey of Spiritual Growth

Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, our spiritual growth starts. As long as we live, there will be room for spiritual growth.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord,” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“In *Steps to Christ*, White posits that for us to be transformed into the image of God, ‘the whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be

restored to His likeness.’ Thus, our total surrender to the Lord is necessary for transformation to take place” (*Victory in Surrender*, p. 68). Daily, let us surrender our lives fully to God.

Pray to become more like Jesus every day.

Day 19: Signs of Spiritual Growth

Scripture tells us: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Mathew 7:15-17).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23).

Even though God forbids us from judging others, we are told, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Our total surrender to God and cooperation with the Holy Spirit takes care of all our spiritual needs. Pray for grace to bear spiritual fruit.

Day 20: The Good Hunger and Thirst

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Mathew 5:6).

It takes God’s grace for a human being to “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” The working of the Holy Spirit in one’s heart produces the yearning for godliness. What does “hunger and thirst for righteousness” look like? Discuss with your prayer partner.

Pray for a perpetual desire of righteousness.

Witnessing and Evangelism

Day 21: Witnessing for Christ

What is witnessing?

We read, “For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:15,16). As we see in these verses, witnessing refers to a testimony. In witnessing for Christ, a Christian tells others about the love and grace of God as demonstrated through Christ as the Savior and Lord of one’s life. Even though the words in the verses above were directed to Saul, who later became Paul, they apply to us all.

After the demon possessed man was healed by Jesus, he wanted to go with the Lord. See what Jesus told him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you” (Mark 5:19). Now that is witnessing, and it is what God wants each one of us to do. Pray for successful witnessing for Christ.

Day 22: What about Evangelism?

Evangelism refers to “the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world,” (Adult Sabbath School Study Guide).

“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“To be an evangelist, a person must have personal understanding and experience of “the everlasting gospel.” It is this gospel that brings belief, confession, conversion (change in one’s life), baptism, discipleship, and the promise of eternal life,” (Adult Sabbath School Study Guide). One does not have to be a pastor to witness and to teach others the Word of God. Pray for wisdom, courage, and all the needed grace to heed the commission of Jesus.

Day 23: The power behind witnessing and evangelizing.

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom, knowledge, courage, and every grace needed to tell others about the hope of eternal life through the Savior, Jesus Christ. See the Lord’s promise to those who share the good news with others: “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Mathew 10:32). Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit and the willingness to spread the gospel. As long as we are willing to serve the Lord, He equips and guides us to spread the gospel.

Ask God to empower you to serve Him.

Day 24: God’s Witnesses in Action

“The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Then they went out of the city and came to Him” (John 4: 28-30). The Samaritan woman did not take time in training to witness. All she needed was the encounter with the Savior. Yet, she directed a crowd to Jesus. The world is thirsty for the truth. The world is dying for want of the Savior. With total surrender and the leading of the Holy Spirit, we too can witness and evangelize. Let us pray and allow God’s will to be done in our lives.

Day 25: Learning from the Disciples

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2:22-24).

The disciples delivered the powerful message about the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The same power that made the disciples so powerful and successful is still available to us today. The death of Jesus is as powerful in saving those who believe today as it was then. Pray for God’s guidance in witnessing and evangelism.

Day 26: Learning from Our Father, God

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfort to her” (Hosea 2:14).

What an attitude of love! “This abrupt transition heightens the picture of the persistent, unending love of God toward His people in spite of all their waywardness. Note the striking contrast between Israel’s “forgot me” in the previous verse and God’s “allure her” in this. We may forget God, but He cannot forget us (Isa. 49:14-16),” (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, p. 894). That is what God does with His people. He attracts them with love and longsuffering. In our witnessing and evangelizing, we are to portray the same attitude toward those we pursue for God. Pray for love, endurance, and persistence in evangelism.

Day 27: From Your Actions to the World

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another ... But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing” (2 Thessalonians 4:11, 12).

Ralph Waldo Emerson put it so well: “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying.” What do our family members, neighbors, colleagues, fellow church members or even strangers see in us? It is most defeating for Christians to preach love with their mouths when their actions scream hate. A loving attitude toward others continues to witness for Christ even when our mouths are shut. Pray for a successful witnessing behavior.

Day 28: A Prerequisites to Witnessing and Evangelism

“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). People can only give what they have. Those who have not had an encounter with Jesus, have no testimony to give for the Lord. Those who do not know the Bible, they cannot evangelize effectively. Praying and studying the Word are crucial if we are to evangelize the world to God’s glory. Pray for adequate preparation in spreading the gospel.

Day 29: Persistent Need

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Mathew 9:36-38). The sin problem on planet earth and the pathetic condition of people have not improved since Jesus made these statements. People need God. And they need those who know Him to teach the rest.

Every Christian has a role to play in pointing others to God. Teach and encourage people to surrender their lives to the Lord. If you are not a Bible teacher or a preacher, how else can you heed the commission of Jesus? Share with your prayer partner and pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how you can serve God in this matter.

Day 30: Christ Way Prevails

“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort” (Ministry of Healing, p. 143). Jesus demonstrated the most successful way of reaching the lost. He ate with them, showed compassion, and met their needs. Then He won their hearts.

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes,’” (Mark 9:23). Indeed, God can use us to save the lost.

Share your experience or your plans of reaching others for Christ. Pray for grace to emulate Jesus.