

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

JANUARY 2023

CHURCH STRONG

**...and I also say to you that you are Peter,
and on this rock I will build My church,
and the forces of Hades will not overpower it.**

Matthew 16:18 (HCSB)

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

JANUARY 2023

JAN-FEB

STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE

Beliefs & Convictions

MAR-APR

STRENGTHEN YOUR LOVE

God & Others

MAY-JUN

STRENGTHEN YOUR PRAYERS

Intercession & Spiritual Warfare

JUL-AUG

STRENGTHEN YOUR WITNESS

Taking The Gospel To The Nations

SEP-OCT

STRENGTHEN YOUR GRIP

Spiritual Growth & Leadership Development

NOV-DEC

**STRENGTHEN YOUR LOVE
AND SERVICE TO OTHERS**

Letting Our Light Shine

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FOREWORD—CHURCH STRONG

Matthew 16:18 HCSB—And I also say to you that you are Peter, and **ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE FORCES OF HADES WILL NOT OVERPOWER IT.**

Christ: The Divine And Infallible Origin Of His Church

Our theme for 2023 is CHURCH STRONG. The identity and nature of any being or offspring will always issue from its origin. When we see a mango, we know it originates from a mango tree. Without the tree, there is no fruit. **Without Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was slain from the foundation of the world to redeem humanity, there is no Church.** His Church was not brought into existence through any of man's work, power, or organization. **CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE ORIGINATOR, AUTHOR, MAKER, AND BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH.** He birthed His Church into being through His sacrifice as the Lamb slain so that all who believe in Him are born again as children of God.

The Church is the collective assembly of born-again believers whose origins are in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Church takes on Christ's identity and nature, the One who has supernaturally brought them forth through a new birth. **The Church was birthed to be spiritual, supernatural, and eternal, just as the Originator, Maker, and Builder is.** The Lamb of God did not give His life to bring forth that which is temporal, limited, and earthly. **He gave His life to birth that which is spiritual, supernatural, and eternal as He is. We are not God (Christ is), but we have been born again by faith in Him that our being, identity, and nature are found in Him.** He is the Vine, and we are His branches.

Christ's Church: Supernatural, Eternal, Magnificent And Powerful

To understand that Jesus has birthed and built His Church to be supernatural, eternal, magnificent, and powerful, we need to look at Him, the Originator, Builder, and Head of His Church. **By looking at who Christ is, our Head, we know who we are as His body.** Colossians 1:15–18 LEB speaks of Jesus:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, **because all things in the heavens and on the earth were created by Him,** things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers, **all things were created through Him and for Him,**

and HE HIMSELF IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, and IN HIM ALL THINGS ARE HELD TOGETHER, and HE HIMSELF IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that HE HIMSELF MAY BECOME FIRST IN EVERYTHING.

Christ is the eternal Lord God Almighty, who is before all things; in Him, all things are held together. He is the Head of His Church, and we are His body. Even as the head cannot be separated from the body, **NOTHING CAN SEPARATE CHRIST FROM HIS CHURCH.** He is the power and strength of His Church. **Jesus has joined us to Himself in a spiritual, supernatural, and eternal oneness. As the Head is alive and indestructible, so is His body. CHRIST'S CHURCH IS SUPERNATURAL, ETERNAL, MAGNIFICENT, AND POWERFUL.** In Matthew 16:18, when Jesus declared to Peter, "I will build My Church," He was not referring to a weak, defeated, timid, vacillating, frail, tired, inferior, lukewarm, and mediocre Church. Jesus did not come to build a Church with a form of godliness but denying its power. **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR CHRIST TO BUILD ANYTHING WEAK, POWERLESS, AND INFERIOR.** The Church Jesus declared He would give His life to build was to be **STRONG, PASSIONATE, POWERFUL, MIGHTY, ON FIRE, AND OVERCOMING THAT EVEN THE COMBINED FORCES OF HELL WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO OVERPOWER IT. Nothing past, present, or future can prevail against His Church—man, being, organization, entity, power, or EVEN TIME.** The Church is strong in Christ and will eternally prevail against any principality, power, force, or weapon formed against it. Jesus emphatically declared in Matthew 16:18 HCSB, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it."

When the Church fails to live as Christ's supernatural, magnificent, powerful body, the problem is with the Church. Has the Church lost the knowledge of who we are in Christ Jesus? Has the Church forgotten that Jesus Christ is the Author, Builder, and Head of His Church? **Have we become ignorant that HE HAS PUT ETERNITY IN HIS CHURCH? We, His body, are spiritually indestructible, imperishable, and inextinguishable.** Have we forgotten that Christ has built His Church to be supernatural, eternal, magnificent, and powerful so that all the collective forces of hell are powerless and doomed in their attempts to prevail against the Church? **Truthfully, the Church shall crush the forces of hell through the Blood of the Lamb, by the Word of our testimony as we love not our lives unto death (Revelation 12:11)! In power, strength, and obedience to the Lamb, His Church shall see His kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).** Nothing can successfully

stand against the Church, where Christ is the Head, and we are His body.

Over the ages, powers of darkness have persisted in trying to destroy the Church through persecution, violence, killings, and untold suffering. Nevertheless, those who have suffered for their faith have grown stronger in God. They were bolder in extending His kingdom, preaching the gospel, and making disciples of nations. Hebrews 11 testifies concerning the body of Christ who had gone before us. For their faith in Christ, they were subjected to the severest of unimaginable persecution and suffered the loss of everything, sometimes even their own lives, as described in Hebrews 11:35–38 LEB:

Women received back their dead by resurrection. But others were tortured, not accepting release, in order that they might gain a better resurrection. And others experienced mocking and flogging, and in addition bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by murder with a sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, impoverished, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about on deserts and mountains and in caves and in holes in the ground.

Yet through all of the violent hate and fiery trials, THEY TRIUMPHED IN STRENGTH, IN THE POWER OF GOD, AND IN DISPLAYING HIS GLORY. Hebrews 11:33–34 LEB testifies these,

WHO THROUGH FAITH CONQUERED kingdoms, ACCOMPLISHED justice, OBTAINED what was promised, SHUT the mouths of lions, EXTINGUISHED the effectiveness of fire, ESCAPED the edge of the sword, WERE MADE STRONG FROM WEAKNESS, BECAME MIGHTY IN BATTLE, PUT TO FLIGHT ENEMY BATTLE LINES.

THEY WERE CHURCH STRONG BECAUSE JESUS WAS THEIR CHIEF CORNERSTONE upon whom they, the living stones, were BUILT TOGETHER AS HIS SPIRITUAL HOUSE. The Church shall prevail and shine forth His glory to the ends of the earth (1 Peter 2:4–10).

Christ's Church: His *Ekklesia*, The Called-Out Ones

The Church's existence is in the kingdom of God and in His kingdom realm. WE LIVE, MOVE AND OPERATE BY CHRIST'S RULE, AUTHORITY, AND POWER. Therefore, we understand that Jesus did not come to build a temporal or physical structure but an eternal, spiritual, and supernatural

assembly of His called-out ones—His church. In the New Testament, *ekklesia* refers to the assembly of believers, commonly translated as the Church.

The Church today must understand the definition of *ekklesia*. It is a Greek word defined as “a called-out assembly or congregation.” Acts 11:25–26 tells us Barnabas and Saul met with the Church, *ekklesia*, in Antioch. 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul says that he had persecuted the Church, the *ekklesia* of God, or the called-out assembly. **The Church is a congregation of believers whom God has called out of the world and into His marvelous light.** 1 Peter 2:9 ESV says:

But you are a CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE for HIS OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.

The Church must see itself as being “called out” by God. If the Church wants to make a difference in the world, we must be different from the world in identity, nature, spirit, passion, and pursuit. We must be like Christ, not like the world. God has graciously called us unto Himself. We are told, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17 NIV). Therefore, Christ’s *ekklesia* cannot be like salt that has lost its flavor, blending in with and tasting just like the world, having no distinction in essence. Salt is distinct in taste from the food it flavors. God has called the Church to be **separated from sin** (1 Peter 1:16), **to embrace fellowship with other believers** (Acts 2:42), **and to be a light to the world** (Matthew 5:14). To be Church Strong, we must be, live, do and walk like Jesus in a lost and dark world.

Jesus did not come to build a soft and fuzzy Church that is seeker-sensitive or man-centered, but rather a strong and mighty Church that is Christ-sensitive, Christ-centered, and seeker-convicting. The *ekklesia* is not a cruise ship, but a battleship redeemed and sent on the mission of the Lord to preach the gospel, set the captives free, heal the sick, destroy the works of the devil and make disciples of nations! **His *ekklesia* is CHURCH STRONG.**

The Church Strong Will Make The Nation Strong

It is time to see America and the nations strong again in faith and righteousness. The key to making a nation strong again is to make the

Church Strong again. It is time for the Church to prevail against all powers of darkness controlling a nation. Any nation is only as strong and free as the Church in that nation is strong and free. When the Church is strong, and vibrant as the salt and light in a nation, that nation will be strong too.

Proverbs 14:34 NLT—“Godliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”

- Psalm 33:12 NKJV—“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”

We need to honestly confront the Church’s condition. Is the *ekklesia* living, moving, and worshiping God according to how Christ has birthed and called us? Have we forgotten to be faithful to Christ and be strong? The Church must acknowledge areas of spiritual strength and health, but we must not ignore areas of weakness, compromise, and unbelief. We must be Church Strong!

At First Assembly of God, we planted pine trees on the slope above our parking area. One day a huge, healthy, strong-looking pine tree crashed and fell, narrowly missing a parked car belonging to Pastor Mel, one of our pastors. Pastor Mel investigated, and on closer inspection, he saw what had caused such a large tree to fall. He discovered an army of termites around and inside the broken trunk that had devoured the inside of the tree. The outside of the tree looked good, but its interior was gutted and hollowed out. It could not even hold up its weight. Are we Church Strong, or have we been gutted out by spiritual termites of lukewarmness, apathy, sin, compromise, and lack of the fear of God? Do we only appear outwardly healthy, strong, and impressive because of the size of our congregation, building, or bank account? Have we been blindsided concerning our true condition because of the number of programs we have, the accolades we receive from others, or our ability to make a name in the community? Are we hypocrites and lawless like the Pharisees and religious leaders Jesus called whitewashed tombs—outwardly beautiful and righteous, but inside full of dead men’s bones? It says in Matthew 23:27–28 NKJV,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white-washed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Many people make the mistake of judging a church’s strength by its

outward appearance, technology, cool marketing promos, crowds, money, or other values of man, but in reality, these can be whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones. They can be totally without the glory of God and the power of the Holy Spirit and can be impotent in effecting spiritual, supernatural, and eternal transformation in lives, communities, and nations. Unless the *ekklesia* is Church Strong, we cannot effectively do and finish the work of God. **JESUS DID NOT COME TO BUILD A PRETTY, DEAD AND RELIGIOUS CHURCH BUT A GLORIOUS LIFE-GIVING CHURCH. The Church Jesus came to build needs no make-over because the radiance of His glory covers all blemishes, spots, and wrinkles. Are we that Church?** You can put lipstick on a pig and dress it up, but it will not transform its nature; it is still a pig.

What Is God's Definition Of A Strong Church?

Human nature tends to measure the greatness of a church by the size of the building, the magnitude of the budget, the personality of the leader, or the number of programs. Since 2020 the three-year pandemic has revealed the actual conditions of churches. Many pastors painfully discovered that the true state of their church was not encouraging. Many churches did not endure the pandemic, and some that did are barely surviving. The churches that prevailed in this pandemic have been persistent in teaching, training, and discipling believers to be strong in their faith, unwavering in their commitment to God, and enduring in following Jesus in all situations. These have not only borne the pandemic but have also thrived in giving, preaching the gospel, reaching the lost, and glorifying God. These are Church Strong. God will turn around for good what the devil meant for evil. **Jesus Christ has appointed His called-out ones to make His Church Strong again by being CHURCH STRONG!**

Just like the *ekklesia* in Hebrews 11, we, too, by the power and the grace of the Holy Spirit, can be Church Strong. Our passion for God can grow stronger amid pain and suffering. Our commitment to love and serve Him can grow deeper in the furnace of testing and persecution. Our obedience to Him can become unshakable even in the face of death. **We are God's warship on this earth. We are His manifested presence and glory. We are prevailers, more than conquerors, and we are those who can do all things through His Holy Spirit, who strengthens us. We are Church Strong! HOW DO WE BECOME CHURCH STRONG? WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH TO BE THE CHURCH JESUS ENVISIONED?** These are what we can do as Christ's *ekklesia* to be Church Strong:

CALLED TO SOLEMN ASSEMBLY: JANUARY 2023

Week 1 – Personal Preparation (January 1–7)

Week 2 – Corporate Prayer And Fasting (January 8–15)

Regional And Corporate Prayer Schedule (January 9–15)

Morning Prayer	6:00–7:00am	Mon–Fri	Red Hill Central Oahu Metro East Honolulu Windward
	6:00–7:00am	Mon, Wed, Fri	Leeward
Corporate Noon Prayer	12:00–1:00pm	Mon–Fri	Red Hill
Corporate Evening Prayer	6:00–8:00pm	Mon–Fri	Red Hill
Leaders’ Training	9am–1pm	Sat	Red Hill
Personal and Family Prayer	Anytime	Sat	No Corporate Assembly
Thanksgiving and Exhortation	6:00–8:00pm	Sun	Red Hill

Instructions For All Concerning Prayer Time

Please do not fellowship during times of prayer. Let us honor the presence of God and guard the spiritual sobriety and sanctity of the occasion. Be encouraged to wait on God and hear Him. Take notes of what you hear.

Evening Prayer Schedule:	6:00–6:30pm	Personal Prayer
	6:30–7:30pm	Corporate Prayer
	7:30–8:00pm	Personal Prayer

Daily Prayer Focus For The Week Of January 8–15, 2023

Day 1 (Sunday)	Ministry of the Word (AM and PM services)
Day 2 (Monday)	Strengthen Your Consecration
Day 3 (Tuesday)	Strengthen Your Core
Day 4 (Wednesday)	Strengthen Your Love
Day 5 (Thursday)	Strengthen Your Prayers
Day 6 (Friday)	Strengthen Yourself in the Power of the Holy Spirit
Day 7 (Saturday)	Leaders' Training by John Harke Personal and Family Prayer
Day 8 (Sunday)	Thanksgiving and Exhortation

Solemn Assembly Part I: Week Of Personal Preparation (Sun–Sat, January 1–7)

Six Steps To Preparation For Solemn Assembly

Sunday, January 1 to Saturday, January 7, 2023 is a week of personal preparation before the Solemn Assembly. Like the Levitical priests who carefully prepared themselves before they entered the Tabernacle to minister to God, it is important that we take time to prayerfully prepare ourselves to enter Solemn Assembly in the spirit and posture of heart that is pleasing to God. Record all that God will be speaking to you throughout this season of prayer and fasting on the pages provided in this booklet.

STEP 1: Plan your week's schedule to include times for corporate and personal prayer.

STEP 2: Personal preparation (Psalm 51:1–19 NKJV)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”

1. Prepare your heart to come before God in humility and contrition.
2. Allow the Holy Spirit to do a deep searching of your heart and life. Bring everything to light and let nothing be hidden.
3. Pray through Psalm 51. Repent and ask God to forgive you, cleanse your heart, and renew a right spirit within you.

4. Ask God to open the eyes of your understanding; remove all unbelief, hardness, pride and resistance to His Holy Spirit. Ask God to put truth and wisdom in your inward parts.
5. Make relationships right with God and with others.

STEP 3: Prepare as a family (Joshua 24:14–15; Psalm 133 NKJV)

“Now, therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!...But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

1. Heads of families: help prepare your family and share the personal application of Solemn Assembly to every person in your household.
2. Minister unity and oneness; bring healing and reconciliation to all relationships in your family, repent of sins committed against each other, and minister love and forgiveness towards one another.
3. Married couples: read 1 Peter 3:1–7 and Colossians 3:18–19.
4. Parents and children: read Colossians 3:20–21.
5. Have a family communion time to seal the oneness of spirit, love and peace; pray Psalm 133 and Colossians 3 into your family.

STEP 4: Spiritual house-cleansing (2 Chronicles 34:3–27 NKJV)

“For in the eighth year of his (Josiah’s) reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images ... in the eighteenth year of his reign ... he sent Shaphan ... to repair the house of the LORD ... because your heart was tender ... and you humbled yourself before Me ... I also have heard you, says the LORD.”

1. Do spiritual house-cleaning (2 Chronicles 34:1–33); if there is any item in your possession that contains spiritually defiling material and is not pleasing to God, get rid of it.
2. These things defile us and our homes, and become gateways for the enemy to infiltrate.
3. Repair your personal and family altar (daily devotions, prayer and the Word).

STEP 5: Prepare all ministries (Colossians 3:12–15 NKJV)

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another; and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

1. Heads of ministries: prepare all helpers and others under your care, and ensure that everyone is informed concerning the purpose and times of prayer.
2. Exhort all to participate in the blessing of Solemn Assembly.
3. Minister unity, reconciliation and oneness; if there is any rift in ministerial relationships, prayerfully bring reconciliation and oneness.
4. Renew commitments to God and each other; pray Psalm 133 and Colossians 3 into your ministry.

STEP 6: Ask God to infuse great faith in us (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

1. Seek God diligently and believe in Him for great things.
2. Step into the week of Solemn Assembly with a contrite heart and great faith.

WHAT IS SOLEMN ASSEMBLY?

The Call To Humbly Seek God In Prayer And Fasting

Joel 1:14 NKJV—“Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God and cry out to the LORD.”

Solemn Assembly is a corporate and personal call to humbly separate ourselves unto God for a time of Consecration, Prayer and Fasting to seek

His face for a specific purpose. It is humbling ourselves before God in repentance and consecration. It is a time to:

- “Break up the fallow ground” of our hearts before God.
- Repent of all sins and return to God wholeheartedly.
- Totally consecrate ourselves to God as His redeemed people.
- Wait on God to hear from Him and take heed.
- Resolve to obey and please Him alone.

What Is Fasting And Prayer?

Fasting and prayer are spiritual ministries that God responds to. In fasting, abstinence from food (and other things) is an outward demonstration of an inward heart of contrition and repentance towards God. It is a spiritual act of humbling and emptying ourselves before God in submission to His Lordship. Fasting crucifies our flesh and self, enthrones God, and brings us into total submission to Him. We deny all that is of ourselves—our will, needs, appetites, desires, priorities, and motives—to embrace all that is His. There are different ways to fast. Let the Lord lead you at all times. We fast on:

- Food (depending on God’s direction)
- Time (setting aside time to pray and wait on God)
- Priorities (denying personal agendas to make seeking Him our first priority)
- Pleasures (abstaining from things we enjoy to devote that time and energy to God)

How Do We Fast?

We are to fast as the Holy Spirit leads us. Let God show you what He is dealing with in your life. All fasting must be accompanied with prayer. There are three different ways we can fast:

- Partial fast—abstain from certain meals or reduce normal portion sizes (no snacking to make up for meals).
- Total fast—abstain from solid foods and consume only liquids (if you have a health condition, consult with your doctor first).
- Daniel fast—abstain from specific types of foods, beverages and/or pleasures (e.g. internet, social media, television, entertainment, sports, recreation, shopping, etc.).

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8: MINISTRY OF THE WORD

MATTHEW 16:15–19 LEB

He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** And Simon Peter answered and said, **“YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!”** And Jesus answered and said to him, **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HADES WILL NOT OVERPOWER IT! I will give you the KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven.”**

EPHESIANS 6:10–13 NIV

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **THEREFORE PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT WHEN THE DAY OF EVIL COMES, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND YOUR GROUND, AND AFTER THAT YOU HAVE DONE EVERYTHING TO STAND.**

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7–18 NLT

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. **THIS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT OUR GREAT POWER IS FROM GOD, NOT FROM OURSELVES.** We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are **NOT CRUSHED.** We are perplexed, but **NOT DRIVEN TO DESPAIR. We are hunted down, but NEVER ABANDONED BY GOD.** We get knocked down, but we are **NOT DESTROYED.** Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies... **THAT IS WHY WE NEVER GIVE UP. Though our BODIES ARE DYING, our SPIRITS ARE BEING RENEWED EVERY DAY.** For our present troubles are small and won't last... yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

JEREMIAH 29:12–14 LEB

“Then when you call Me, and you come and pray to Me, then I will listen to you. WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME, THEN YOU WILL FIND ME, IF YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. AND I WILL LET MYSELF BE FOUND BY YOU,” declares Yahweh.

MONDAY, JANUARY 9: STRENGTHEN YOUR CONSECRATION

..... 2 TIMOTHY 1:9 NIV

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. *This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*

..... MATTHEW 3:11 NLT

I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be His slave and carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

..... ROMANS 12:1 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

..... LEVITICUS 20:26 BSB

You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own.

..... ROMANS 12:2 ESV

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

..... PSALM 4:3 NKJV

But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the LORD will hear when I call to Him.

..... HEBREWS 12:14 ESV

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

..... JOSHUA 3:5 ESV

*Then Joshua said to the people, **“CONSECRATE yourselves, for tomorrow THE LORD WILL DO WONDERS AMONG YOU.”***

..... **EXODUS 30:30 NASB**

You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me.

..... **1 PETER 2:24 BSB**

He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. "By His wounds you have been healed."

..... **EXODUS 19:22 ESV**

Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.

..... **PSALM 51:10 ESV**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

..... **PSALM 51:17 ESV**

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

..... **ROMANS 6:16 ESV**

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

..... **2 CORINTHIANS 7:1 NASB**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

EXHORTATION: STRENGTHEN YOUR CONSECRATION

Prayer Of Consecration

We begin by praying this from our hearts:

Father, I come to You with my knees bent and my heart bowed before You. From the core of my being, I cry to You; please consume me with Your holy fire and passion. Let Your consecrating fire burn through every part of my inner being, soul, and spirit devouring to ashes all things—sins, other loves, cares of life, or distractions—till only first love, pure passion, and fiery zeal for You remain. Let me be wholly Yours and altogether consecrated and devoted to You. Let prayer and holy worship

flow unceasingly out of a life that has been purified, set ablaze, and filled by Your Holy Spirit's fire. Let them ascend continually as incense before Your throne. May prayer and worship flow from my consecrated spirit as rivers of prophetic fires—living fires—accomplishing Your will. These will be prophetic fires ignited by Your Holy Spirit's flames from heaven. I lay my life down to You in absolute consecration, my Father. Have Your way with me, Lord, and do what You will with me. May all that I am, do and say be altogether pleasing unto You. Help me to live strong for You. I live for You!

Now take time to wait on God. Hear Him and be changed by His Holy Spirit.

Consecration Is Essential To Being Church Strong

Until the Church lives wholly consecrated to God, we cannot be Church Strong. **THE MOST POWERFUL LIFE IS ONE THAT IS CONSECRATED AND HOLY.** The Holy Spirit is able to infill, live, and move in a vessel consecrated as holy unto God. Consecration is the pathway to God's presence, power, and glory residing in us. In holiness, we have access to Him. We can be filled with His presence and empowered by Him. We see this truth played out in God's relationship with His people throughout the Bible. Isaiah 35:8–10 NLT prophesies God setting a Highway of Holiness for His people, the redeemed, to walk on:

And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. Lions will not lurk along its course, nor any other ferocious beasts. There will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will walk on it. Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

God's pathway for His Church to be strong, secure, filled with singing, and crowned with everlasting joy is to walk in His Highway of Holiness. It is His Highway that the unclean, evil, and fools cannot travel. Psalm 14:1 NLT declares, "Only fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; not one of them does good!" Without consecration, we cannot be holy. Without holiness, we can have the outward appearance of godliness but be inwardly empty of God's presence, power and glory. His presence, power, and glory strengthen His Church

and separate true followers of Christ from those who merely profess Him. We need to be Church Strong, especially in this age and hour. Without consecration and holiness, the Church has no light, power, or testimony. We must choose to walk consecrated lives on the Highway of Holiness.

Consecrated Through The Dealings Of The Holy Spirit

May the Church yearn to be wholly consecrated to God that we cry out and welcome the deep dealings of the Holy Spirit—where nothing is hidden, whitewashed, or ignored. **Each of these dealings is a holy fire that exposes and confronts sin, self, religiosity, presumptuousness, pride, hypocrisy, compromise, worldliness, apathy, and anything displeasing to God.** It is a fire that does not allow us to live confessing Christ with our lips while denying Him in our hearts and ways. This was the same holy fire that judged and consumed Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1–10). **The Holy Spirit is not just the Comforter but also the discerner of hearts and a fire that consumes sins.** Matthew 3:11 says that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is the Lord who lives in us that will not tolerate the defilement of His temple, our body.

Without the dealings of the Holy Spirit to consecrate us unto God, we will neither understand nor have first love for God. The Holy Spirit's dealings help us to be fully set apart and devoted to Him. **Consecration prepares and sets our hearts apart to love God first.** A consecrated first love is where we no longer have any taste, appetite, or desire for anything else except to love and serve Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are people consumed and set on fire by the flames of heaven that we burn with an undying passion for Jesus—to glorify Him.

True consecration leads us to the place where we are wholly consumed by Him, filled with Him, obsessed with Him, and possessed with love for Him. We are His. It takes us to a place where we no longer live for ourselves or anything else. We live for Him alone. He fills our hearts, minds, souls, and lives. A consecrated heart yearns to live a life true to Jesus and strive to please Him in all that we do.

It is a first love that causes the whole heart to stand in awe and reverence of Him. It is anchored in the fear of the living God that we are not carelessly presumptuous nor flagrantly dishonoring of Him, nor casually dismissive of His holiness because we believe in a grace defined by a worldly and carnal mind. Without holy consecration, we are easily deceived into living contentedly without first love, passion, or priority for God. **The only way to be Church Strong is to live with Jesus in first love, all-consuming passion, and uncompromising obedience.**

Strengthening Our Consecration Unto God

We must strengthen our consecration so that we do not allow forces of darkness to defile us nor erode our devotion and commitment to God. We must strengthen our consecration lest:

- We become familiar and comfortable with sin and compromise.
- We are not disturbed by a shallow conviction that fails to cut and bring repentance.
- We are not concerned when we easily fall into temptation without effort to resist.
- We perceive grace as overriding God's requirement for holiness.
- We lose our fear of God and live like the world.

We must strengthen our consecration that we stand and persist as Church Strong in any circumstance or challenge. These are areas of consecration that we must strengthen to live genuinely for God:

- **Strengthen our first love and holy passion for God** that are undying, unquenchable and impossible to put out.
- **Strengthen our devotion and commitment to God** that they are unwavering, unchanging, unshakable and able to be tested and tried by fire.
- **Strengthen our submission and obedience to God** that we love to obey and do His will. We want nothing more than this.
- **Strengthen our fear of God** in honoring Him fully and never be casual, careless, or presumptuous with anything concerning Him.
- **Strengthen our focus on God** by always fixing our eyes on Him and never taking them away.

Prayer Focus

Take time to wait, seek and pray until the Holy Spirit manifests Himself to you:

- Submit to the searching and dealing of the Holy Spirit.
- To search, reveal, deal and convict.
- To speak, minister, cleanse and sanctify.
- To restore you as a consecrated and holy vessel in God's hands.

1. Be completely open and yielded to the dealings and ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. Call on God in repentance and contrition over areas lacking consecration.
3. In humility and trust submit completely under the mighty hands of God.
4. Acknowledge and completely repent in response to all His corrections.
5. Cry out to be forgiven and restored into a holy and right relationship with the Holy Spirit.
6. Pray and ask to be baptized, filled and saturated in the Holy Spirit.

A. Strengthen your consecration unto God.

1. Pray that you diligently watch and do not allow anything to defile your consecration that:
 - a. You do not become familiar and comfortable with sin and compromise.
 - b. You are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's conviction that bear fruit of repentance.
 - c. You earnestly resist temptation and sin until the point of bloodshed to overcome.
 - d. You trust, honor and respect God's grace that enables you to be holy and not sin.
 - e. You live, walk and function in the holy fear of God.
 - f. You do not live like the world but as a holy and royal priest of God.
2. Pray to strengthen your consecration so you will stand strong.

B. Strengthen these areas of consecration that you live for God:

1. Your first love and holy passion for God that they are unquenchable.
2. Your devotion and commitment to God that they are unwavering even when tried by fire.
3. Your submission and obedience to God that you love to do His will.
4. Your fear of God in honoring Him fully, without being presumptuous towards Him.
5. Your focus on God, always fixing your eyes on Him.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10: STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE

PSALM 51:6 NASB1995

BEHOLD, YOU DESIRE TRUTH IN THE INNERMOST BEING, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

1 SAMUEL 16:7 NASB1995

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for **God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.**”

PSALM 73:26 LEB

My flesh and heart failed, but GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY REWARD FOREVER. (NKJV—My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.)

EPHESIANS 3:14–21 NKJV

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **that HE WOULD GRANT YOU, according to THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, to BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;** that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. **NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKS IN US,** to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7–18 NLT

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but **we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. THIS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT OUR GREAT POWER IS FROM GOD, NOT FROM OURSELVES. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are NOT CRUSHED. We are perplexed, but NOT DRIVEN TO DESPAIR. We are hunted down, but NEVER ABANDONED BY GOD. We get knocked down, but we are NOT DESTROYED.** Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. **But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.”** We know that

God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to Himself together with you. All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. **That is why we never give up. Though our BODIES ARE DYING, our SPIRITS ARE BEING RENEWED EVERY DAY.** For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16 NASB1995

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though **OUR OUTER MAN IS DECAYING, YET OUR INNER MAN IS BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY.**

EXHORTATION: STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE

The Core Is The Innermost Part Of Our Being, Our Spirit

We are spirit, soul and body. **Our core is our spirit—the innermost part of our being. As a follower of Christ, our born-again and regenerated spirit is our core. WE ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS OUR CORE IS STRONG.** Courage or fear, victory or defeat, and hope or hopelessness all stem from our innermost being. **Therefore, to be Church Strong, our inner being must be strengthened.** Proverbs 20:27 NASB says, “The spirit of a person is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of his being.” Romans 8:16 NKJV declares, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” **The Bible also speaks of our core as our inner being, inner person, or inner man.**

- “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law.” Romans 7:22 NIV
- “Therefore we do not lose heart, but even if our outer person is being destroyed, yet our inner person is being renewed day after day.” 2 Corinthians 4:16 LEB
- “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” Ephesians 3:16 NKJV

If we are to be Church Strong, the five core spiritual pillars we must strengthen are our commitment to biblical Truth, obedience to God and His Word, character with integrity and faithfulness, godly convictions, and holiness. These are essential bulwarks in our inner being that must

be strengthened and not compromised or trafficked at all costs for us to be Church Strong.

Adversities, Troubles, And Trials Reveal Our Core

Proverbs 24:10 NKJV says, **“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”** (NLT, “If you fail under pressure, your strength is too small.”) **WE ARE ONLY AS STRONG, BOLD, COURAGEOUS, AND OVERCOMING AS WE ARE IN OUR CORE. We are what we are from the inside out.** Adversities, troubles, and trials inevitably will reveal the state of our hearts and spirit. If these pressures cause us to lose courage and we slack, fear, fail, let go or give up, our core is weak. **For Christ’s ekklesia to be Church Strong, we must be strong in our inner being.**

Jeremiah was complaining to God about the hardships he was going through as he prophesied to a backslidden king and nation. He was threatened, persecuted, beaten, and at times thrown into the dungeon for his obedience to God. The Lord in love responded to the prophet in Jeremiah 12:5 LEB:

If you run with foot soldiers and they have made you weary, then how will you compete with horses? If you have fallen in a peaceful land, then how will you do in the thickets of the Jordan?

Like Jeremiah, we are not only called to run with foot soldiers, but we are to race with horses in the supernatural strength of God. If today we are struggling and fainting because of some troubles, how will we do when we walk through greater hardships, adversities, and anguish for our faith? It is time to strengthen our core so that we can do well at all times.

Strength in our spiritual core is not carnal or of human nature. It is supernatural— IT IS OF GOD. It is a manifestation of the power of God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that **THIS ALL-SURPASSING POWER IS FROM GOD AND NOT FROM US.**” Psalm 18:32 NKJV testifies, **“IT IS GOD WHO ARMS ME WITH STRENGTH, and makes my way perfect.”**

We need to strengthen our spiritual core so that no crushing weights or overwhelming pressures of spiritual attacks, trials, or sufferings can overpower or stop us. When our spirit is made strong in Christ, we can say, **“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME”** (Philippians 4:13 NKJV). **To be strengthened by the Holy Spirit is to be given the ability, power, health, and might to obey, endure, prevail, be well, be strong, and overpower any obstacle or adversary.** We are Church

Strong if our core is spiritually robust, healthy, and vibrant. Proverbs 23:7 NKJV states, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” The medical doctor often examines the tongue to know a person’s health condition. Likewise, the Lord examines our innermost part to see the state of our being. We are not to be like the religious leaders whom Jesus exposed and rebuked in Mathew 23:26–28 ESV:

You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

We are only as strong as our core. God is always seeking those whose hearts and minds are set on Him, who love and obey Him wholeheartedly, uncompromisingly, and enduringly. We must, out of necessity, strengthen our core daily with all that we can access from the Holy Spirit through grace and prayer so we can love and obey Him completely. We need His Word and His Holy Spirit to infill us daily. Then inwardly, we are supernaturally encouraged, empowered, emboldened, and edified with grace, faith, and anointing from Him. **WHEN OUR SPIRIT IS STRONG, WE ARE STRONG TO PREVAIL.**

It Is Supernatural Strength In Our Core That Causes Us To Prevail

Isaiah 40:30–31 KJV says that even the strength of youth will fail, “But THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.” We will soon discover that to be Church Strong is not dependent on strength from any source except the Holy Spirit. When facing battles with the combined forces of hell, all strengths will fail, be it the strength of youth, experience, talent, education, networking, or the world’s knowledge. **IT IS THE STRENGTH THAT CHRIST BUILDS IN HIS CHURCH THAT IS SUPERNATURAL AND OVERCOMING, MAKING HIS CHURCH STRONG AND MIGHTY TO PREVAIL.** When the Holy Spirit strengthens us in our core, we can do all things and be more than conquerors in all situations, ultimately glorifying Jesus Christ on the earth. Therefore, no one can boast that he has done it by his own hand, strength, or even hard work. Everyone will know that God’s strength, power, and grace at work in us have brought the victory.

WE NEED TO EXAMINE OUR CORE AND SEE ON WHOSE OR BY WHAT STRENGTH WE ARE DEPENDENT. David was young and dependent on God when he conquered Goliath. Caleb was old when he asked Joshua for the mountain promised to him by faith, and he prevailed. Any other strength will fail in the battle to obey God, fulfill His call, or finish His work here on earth. Solomon's strength from his learned wisdom failed. Moses' strength from his education and training in Pharaoh's court failed. Samson's strength from his gifting failed. These were all impotent to supernaturally strengthen their cores. For David, Caleb and Moses, it was only in their seeking of God that the Lord strengthened their spirit and heart to follow and obey Him.

There are many biblical examples of those whose cores were strengthened by God to live strong and do mighty things for God's kingdom in adverse times:

- Abraham knew his body was old, weak, and unable to reproduce, but he believed in God who strengthened him to become the father of nations.
- Moses knew he stuttered and was afraid to appear before Pharaoh, but God strengthened his heart. He then obeyed by faith and delivered Israel from 400 years of slavery.
- Esther knew she did not have the courage to go before the king. So she called for all the Jews in Shushan to join her in a three-day fast. As God strengthened her, she went before the king and courageously saved all the exiled Jews from genocide.
- Paul declared that he was the chief of sinners, but he trusted in God's amazing love and grace. He became one of the greatest apostles and missionaries of all time.

All these knew that there was no strength or power on earth that could make them strong in their spirit to do the will of God except the strength of the Lord. **WE MUST BE STRENGTHENED IN OUR CORE BY THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Strengthen Our Core To Be Church Strong In Fulfilling God's Call

The foreword spoke of how a huge, strong-looking pine tree crashed and fell because an army of termites had devoured its insides and gutted its core. It is a lesson for the *ekklesia* demonstrating the need to be strong from the inside out. **WHEN WE STRENGTHEN OUR CORE, WE ARE CHURCH STRONG IN CHRIST; THE COMBINED FORCES OF HELL**

CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST US. WE PREVAIL AGAINST AND GAIN VICTORIES OVER THEM IN BATTLES. We also subject them to the authority of God and His Word as we triumph over them.

Saul, chosen and anointed by God to be the first king of Israel, began humble, mighty, courageous, and effective as God's chosen. The Lord gave him a great call and destiny, yet he fell and chose to die by suicide because he did not address his inward weaknesses and vulnerabilities. **He never strengthened these weak areas in his core that caused him to fall when tempted and tested.** Eaten with jealousy, Saul gave in to hate and murder and even consulted a witch rather than God in his most desperate moment. Eventually, he chose to die by suicide in his final battle. David, whom Saul had previously sought to murder, lamented how the mighty king had fallen. **Unlike Saul, David perpetually sought God to deal with his sins and strengthen himself in the Lord.** The distinction between them was that Saul never fully rooted out his sins the way David did. **David was always pursuing God, caring for his heart and spirit. God testified of him as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22).**

The End-Time Church Generation Must Be Church Strong

The Church today may be the generation that will usher in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We, then, could be the generation that will also see the gospel preached to the ends of the earth, making disciples of all nations. We could be the generation that will see satan unleashing brutal attacks on the Church to intimidate, inhibit, stop, silence, kill and destroy. **THERE IS NO EVIL THE POWERS OF DARKNESS WILL NOT DO.** They will threaten, persecute, imprison, torture, and even kill to weaken and destroy the Church. **The Church, the redeemed of the Lord, is Christ's arm of prevailing strength and power in this world to reach out, seek, rescue, heal and save.**

It takes strength in the heart and spirit to follow and obey Christ wholeheartedly through the fiery trials, terrifying persecutions, and untold sufferings in the end-time battles. **By His power and strength in our core, we victoriously prevail in completing all that Jesus has put in our hands.** It takes consistent, enduring, and prevailing strength in our innermost being to follow God wholeheartedly like Caleb and do what he did. **If the core of the Church is not strong, the ekklesia will not be Church Strong. Jesus warns of the hardships, pressures, and persecutions during the end times in Luke 21:9–19 NLT:**

“And when you hear of wars and insurrections, don't panic. Yes, these

things must take place first, but the end won't follow immediately." Then He added, "Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven. But before all this occurs, there will be a time of **GREAT PERSECUTION**. You will be dragged into synagogues and **PRISONS**, and you will **STAND TRIAL** before kings and governors **BECAUSE YOU ARE MY FOLLOWERS. BUT THIS WILL BE YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO TELL THEM ABOUT ME**. So don't worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, or I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will **BETRAY YOU**. They will **EVEN KILL** some of you. And everyone will **HATE YOU** because you are My followers. But not a hair of your head will perish! **BY STANDING FIRM, YOU WILL WIN YOUR SOULS.**"

The end times are tumultuous and brutally difficult. There will be wars, rumors of wars, and natural devastations caused by earthquakes, famines, and plagues. In the midst of these, great persecution will come upon the Church. Some believers will be seized and dragged before religious bodies, stand trial before governing authorities, put in prison or killed. Even those closest to us, such as parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, will betray the followers of Christ. The Church will not only go through the pressures of horrifying global unrest, but we will also undergo untold pressures from severe persecution for our faith in Christ. **NEVERTHELESS, CHRIST HAS CALLED US TO BE CHURCH STRONG, SO WE DO NOT FALTER OR FAINT IN FEAR, BUT PREVAIL. He is the one who will strengthen us and give us words to speak about Him before our persecutors. In fact, HE SAYS THAT BY STANDING FIRM, WE WILL WIN THE SOULS OF THOSE COMING AGAINST US. Now is the time we must strengthen our core to be Church Strong.**

Strengthening The Five Vital Areas Of Your Core To Be Church Strong

To be Church Strong, we must strengthen these vital key areas in our core: **Commitment To Biblical Truth, Obedience To God's Word, Character With Integrity And Faithfulness, Conviction and Holiness**. These are areas in which the Church will be tested and tempted by the powers of darkness. Their aim is to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10).

If the Church compromises on biblical truth, obedience to God and His Word, character with integrity, godly convictions, and holiness, it will self-destruct. **THESE ARE SPIRITUAL PILLARS THAT STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH CORE SO THAT ALL THE COMBINED POWERS OF HELL CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST US.** We overcome them all, establishing the kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven by doing and finishing His work.

Many have a great calling from God but lack strength in their inner being. They compromise, sin, crumble, and fall away when subject to the pressures of testing and temptations. **Indeed, many mighty ones cave and crumble because they fail to strengthen their core with faith in biblical truth, obedience, character, convictions, and holiness.**

1. Strengthening The Core Of Your Commitment To Biblical Truth

We must be committed to biblical truth, especially during this time. The Lord raised a lament and an indictment against Israel through the prophet Isaiah concerning their rejection of truth, righteousness, and justice in the land in Isaiah 59:14–15 NLT.

Our courts oppose the righteous, and justice is nowhere to be found. TRUTH STUMBLES IN THE STREETS, AND HONESTY HAS BEEN OUTLAWED. Yes, TRUTH IS GONE, and anyone who renounces evil is attacked. The LORD looked and was displeased to find there was no justice.

Today, the Holy Spirit is raising the same lament against many nations. The Church is now living in a world where truth has fallen, honesty is outlawed, justice is perverted, and faith in Jesus is most hated. Those who stand for truth, justice, and faith in Christ are being vilified, canceled, and sometimes targeted with violence. Satan's forces are on a rampage to stamp out biblical truth and faith in Christ Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Without Him, who is Truth, there is no righteousness, justice, or salvation.

One of the world's biggest challenges is the onslaught of false teachings, lies, misrepresentations of Christ, and deceptive words being pushed as truth by demonic forces. Today, this is the world to which the Church is reaching out to share the love of Christ. These falsehoods are being peddled as truth by many voices. Unless we strengthen our commitment to biblical truth, the Church will be swept away by the many streams of wicked lies and deception. If the Church is deceived into compromising

the truth, we will lose all power to win others to Christ, and also, we will be destroyed. **The Church that Christ builds that the gates of hell shall not prevail against is built on Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. WE ARE CHURCH STRONG WHEN WE KNOW, LIVE, ABIDE AND WALK IN BIBLICAL TRUTH.**

When we strengthen our commitment to biblical truth in our core, we can do what 2 Timothy 4:2–4 NKJV says concerning preaching the Word in an age where many itching ears are turned toward falsehood rather than sound doctrine:

PREACH THE WORD! Be ready in season and out of season.

Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the Truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Only the true Word of God can save, heal and deliver. Any other truth that contradicts the holy scriptures is a lie leading to destruction having no power to save. The Church must be steadfast, strong, and committed to biblical truth. **Then we can hold fast to the faithful word we have been taught, that we may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict and live by it (Titus 1:9).**

WE HAVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH TO DISCERN LIES. Many have professed to believe in Christ and know His truth. They have quoted scriptures out of context to validate their unholy practice or approval of abominable sins that God hates such as same-sex marriage, homosexuality, abortion, and euthanasia. They have created a god according to the demonic lies they have accepted and are propagating. **There is no godly soundness in their beliefs, speech, or conduct. The deceived live in the absence of the fear of God. Against such attacks, the Church must be strong in knowing biblical truth, living by it, and preaching it. We must speak things that are proper for sound doctrine (Titus 2:1 NKJV),** although we will be denounced, vilified, and held in contempt as bigots and racists. The Church must be strong to stand and withstand in commitment to God and His truth. How do we deal with those trafficking in lies, falsehoods, and useless arguments from corrupt minds? 1 Timothy 6:3–5 NKJV instructs us,

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine

which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Biblical truth is the only accurate standard by which the church must trust, believe, live, and share. BIBLICAL TRUTH IS THE ONLY TRUTH THAT IS ABLE TO SAVE THE WORLD, and HIS NAME IS JESUS. We must strengthen our core by trusting in the truth, Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

2. Strengthening The Core Of Your Obedience To God And His Word

For the Church to be strong in our core, we must strengthen our obedience to God and His Word. In His obedience to His Father, Jesus Christ sets the example for His Church to follow. In John 4:34 NKJV, He declared to His disciples, **“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” OBEDIENCE IS THE EVIDENCE OF OUR FIRST LOVE FOR GOD AND OUR FAITH IN HIM.** We delight to do His will because we love and trust Him. 1 John 5:3 NKJV says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Only God can lead us to walk in obedience to His will and purpose. **THE POWER OF OBEDIENCE IS IN GOD’S RESPONSE TO OUR OBEDIENCE.**

- **BLESSED** is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. Psalm 128:1 NKJV
- But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I **will be an ENEMY TO YOUR ENEMIES and an adversary to your adversaries.** Exodus 23:22 NKJV
- You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may **LIVE** and that it may **BE WELL** with you, and that you may **prolong your days in the land which YOU SHALL POSSESS.** Deuteronomy 5:33 NKJV
- Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above **all nations of the earth.** Deuteronomy 28:1 NKJV
- This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do

according to all that is written in it. For then **YOU WILL MAKE YOUR WAY PROSPEROUS**, and then **YOU WILL HAVE GOOD SUCCESS**. Joshua 1:8 NKJV

The power of our obedience to God is that He is for us so that nothing can be against us. We must strengthen the core of our obedience so we can stand and withstand in honoring and obeying Him in the worst of times. We will be blessed, prospering, and overcoming as He sets us high above all nations. God, Himself, will be an enemy to our enemies, an adversary to our adversaries, and He will make our way prosperous so that we have good success, especially in the end times. **WHEN WE OBEY GOD AND ADHERE TO HIS WORD, WE ALIGN OURSELVES WITH HIM WHO IS FOR US. He has our back, front and sides, and He fights for us.**

3. Strengthening The Core Of Your Character: Integrity And Faithfulness

Our character is the sum total of who we are morally as a person. It concerns the attributes, qualities, and traits peculiar to our nature, personality, disposition, and temperament and it encompasses our spiritual, moral, ethical, and mental traits. **THEREFORE, THE CHURCH MUST HAVE UPRIGHTNESS OF CHARACTER IN ACTION.** Britannica dictionary defines character as the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves.

Two essential pillars that strengthen the Church are INTEGRITY AND FAITHFULNESS in our character. Integrity (*tōm* in Hebrew) means uprightness, completeness, innocence, and simplicity. Merriam-Webster's dictionary says that integrity implies **TRUSTWORTHINESS and INCORRUPTIBILITY TO A DEGREE THAT ONE IS INCAPABLE OF BEING FALSE TO A TRUST, RESPONSIBILITY, OR PLEDGE.** It defines integrity as having these three qualities:

- **Incorruptibility**—referring to firm adherence (faithfulness) to a code of especially moral or artistic values.
- **Soundness**—speaks of an unimpaired condition.
- **Completeness**—identifies the quality or state of being complete or undivided.

The integrity of character means that we are incorruptible in adhering to God's moral standard of values. Our inner being is sound, upright, and unimpaired by anything not right in the eyes of God. Inwardly we have completeness because we possess godly virtues such as righteousness,

honor, goodness, sincerity, probity (tried and proven honesty), morality, and uprightness. **Therefore, a character with integrity and faithfulness is blameless, just, above reproach and accusation, and innocent (free from evil or guilt).**

Faithfulness (‘*ēmûnâ* in Hebrew) means **firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, or steadiness**. The Church needs to have integrity and also be firm, steadfast, and steady in our ways, and obedient to God. Without integrity and faithfulness the Church is like the pine tree mentioned in the foreword. Outwardly it looked huge, strong, and majestic, but inwardly an army of termites had gutted its insides, leaving it hollow. One day it crashed and fell even without a strong wind. Jesus harshly rebuked the religious leaders of His day, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who like the pine tree, looked grand and upright, and beautiful outwardly. They were whitewashed tombs, however, inwardly they were full of lawlessness and evil like dead men’s bones.

Similarly, if the Church lacks integrity and faithfulness in character, we are no better than these religious leaders. Outwardly we may have the appearance of godliness and righteousness, but inwardly be bankrupt of holiness, integrity, and faithfulness to God. The Church will also be bankrupt of God’s presence, power and glory. The *ekklesia* will become a reproach to God and a despicable hypocrite in the eyes of the world. Indeed God will not receive a church without integrity and faithfulness in character. **MAY THE CHURCH BE STRENGTHENED IN CHARACTER WITH INTEGRITY AND FAITHFULNESS TO BE INCORRUPTIBLE, SOUND, AND COMPLETE; then we will be Church Strong—undefeatable and unshakable in the face of any adversary or attack. The Church will overcome and prevail in preaching the gospel and making disciples of nations.** The Bible repeatedly speaks of the need to have a character with integrity and faithfulness.

- “In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; **in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility**”
Titus 2:7 NKJV
- “By this I know that You are well pleased with me, because my enemy does not triumph over me. As for me, **You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever.**”
Psalm 41:11–12 NKJV
- “**He who walks with integrity walks securely**, but he who perverts his ways will become known.” Proverbs 10:9 NKJV
- “**Better is the poor who walks in his integrity** than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.” Proverbs 28:6 NKJV

- **“The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.”** Proverbs 11:3 NKJV
- **“The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.”**—Proverbs 20:7 NKJV
- **“Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”** 1 Peter 3:16 NKJV
- **“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”** Luke 16:10 NKJV
- **“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You.”** Psalm 25:21 NKJV

4. Strengthening The Core Of Your Convictions

“And when He has come, HE WILL CONVICT THE WORLD OF SIN, AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND OF JUDGMENT.” John 16:8 NKJV

2 Timothy 3:16–17 Darby—“Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work.”

1 Thessalonians 1:5 NASB—“**For our gospel did not come to you in Word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;** just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

Hebrews 11:1 ESV—“**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**”

Godly conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing illumination and understanding to hearts concerning Christ and His Word. It is a work that causes the heart to be ENLIGHTENED, CONVINCED, REPROVED, AND FULLY PERSUADED CONCERNING THE VERACITY OF GOD AND HIS WORD. It helps one see the state of their heart and the need for change or action, no matter the costs.

Christ and His Word are the only true and sure bedrocks upon which we can derive the convictions that make us Church Strong. Any other bedrock will produce erroneous or misguided convictions that will not produce the faith, strength, or courage the Church needs to obey God.

Conviction is a resolute and unwavering belief of the heart and

conscience resulting from being fully persuaded and convinced that **God and His Word are infinitely, eternally, and invariably true**. It produces a certainty and sureness in the heart and mind that are free from doubt concerning biblical truths. **There is an iron-cast confidence in God, causing one to obey His Word regardless of consequences**. Martin Luther said because scripture convicted him, **“MY CONSCIENCE IS CAPTIVE TO THE WORD OF GOD. I CAN NOT AND WILL NOT RECENT ANYTHING, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”** A fully convicted heart cannot and will not recant God nor His Word, no matter what one may have to face. When the Church has convictions aligned with God and His Word, we will not fear any resistance or hardships that may come our way regarding our obedience to God because God will back us up. The battle is God’s.

Josh McDowell, an evangelical Christian apologist, evangelist and author, says, **“Having convictions can be defined as being so THOROUGHLY CONVINCED that CHRIST AND HIS WORD are both OBJECTIVELY TRUE AND RELATIONALLY MEANINGFUL that you ACT ON YOUR BELIEFS REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.”** Albert Mohler, an evangelical theologian and the ninth president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary stated, **“Convictions are not merely beliefs we hold; they are those BELIEFS THAT HOLD US IN THEIR GRIP. WE WOULD NOT KNOW WHO WE ARE BUT FOR THESE BEDROCK BELIEFS, AND WITHOUT THEM WE WOULD NOT KNOW HOW TO LEAD.”** Convictions are not just what the Church must hold on to; they must hold the Church in their grip for us to be strong and prevail against all powers of darkness.

Abraham’s conviction was an iron-cast belief that whatever God said was invariably and infinitely true, unchangeable, and trustworthy. His conviction caused him to obey God regardless of impossibilities. It enabled him to overcome all obstacles and endure all hardships to stand firm in submission to and alignment with God’s Word. **His conviction caused him to be so SINGLE-MINDED, RESOLUTE, TENACIOUS, UNCOMPROMISING, AND IRON-WILLED IN TRUSTING GOD THAT HE COULD NOT BE DISSUADED, INTIMIDATED, OR STOPPED.** Romans 4:18–22 NIV speaks of Abraham’s faith and conviction:

AGAINST ALL HOPE, Abraham IN HOPE BELIEVED and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. **Yet he**

did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, BEING FULLY PERSUADED THAT GOD HAD POWER TO DO WHAT HE HAD PROMISED. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

We are in an age where the gates of hell—all of hell’s combined forces, strategies, powers, and wickedness—are being unleashed against the Church and this world. **Satan hates God, His Church, and the world. The devil knows he cannot touch God, but he is hell-bent on destroying the Church and condemning the world.** Nevertheless, Jesus Christ has declared that He will build His Church so that the combined forces of hell cannot overcome it. One way that satan is attacking the Church is by attacking godly convictions based on belief in God and His Word. He comes against the truth. He lies, and he deceives. He appeals to the flesh and manipulates the human mind to believe in his falsehoods. Many of those deceived believe in “women’s rights” but will not or cannot tell who is a woman or a man because of gender confusion. Some people believe in freedom and rights but propagate murdering unborn babies as a right. **The world may be without godly convictions, but the CHURCH MUST BE GRIPPED BY GODLY CONVICTIONS TO STAND AND WITHSTAND AGAINST ALL THE HELLISH ONSLAUGHT TO INTIMIDATE, SILENCE OR DESTROY IT.** We cannot let fear drive us to be more zealous about being relevant to the world than to be distinct from the world by being holy and righteous. A heart that is without convictions or has shallow convictions may be the result of a seared conscience because of sin. It is incapable of being convicted.

Satan knows that if the Church has no convictions, it will be weak, shallow, blind, and foolish. It is like a ship sailing without a ballast to hold and keep it steady and safe in the worst of the storm, swiftly sinking. **Satan constantly attacks the Church concerning convictions because he fears a Church that lives by godly convictions.** He attempts to bait and deceive the Church to compromise and not live by godly convictions according to God’s Word, thereby misleading and weakening the saints. Whether it be an erroneous or weak conviction, the Church is no longer strong to obey but feeble, vacillating, compromising, and shallow in faith and holiness. **We must strengthen the core of our convictions. THEN, WE WILL BE THE FORMIDABLE WARSHIP OF GOD IN THESE END-TIME BATTLES.**

CONVICTION PUTS A FIRE IN THE BELLY OF THE CHURCH TO OBEY GOD AND A FEARLESSNESS AND COURAGE TO BE FAITHFUL AND COMMITTED TO HIM. They also keep the Church walking in holiness and

the fear of the Lord, bringing Him glory. Without convictions, we are like a house without walls giving easy access to every sin and evil to intrude, whereby compromise is the norm and sin brings no godly sorrow leading to repentance. For this reason, homosexual pastors have been ordained in some denominations, adultery is treated lightly, and money is viewed as a sign of success and God's approval. **A CHURCH WITHOUT GODLY CONVICTION IS SOFT ON SIN AND RESISTANT TOWARDS HOLINESS.** It is not the Church Jesus died to bring forth as His holy, special people, a holy nation and royal priesthood. It does not bear His glory, presence, or character.

We must strengthen our convictions to be Church Strong by being fully convinced that God and His Word are true, essential, and life-changing. **We must be willing to give up everything, even our lives, to obey and live out these truths until Jesus comes again.**

5. Strengthening The Core Of Your Holiness

God is holy. He speaks to His people in Leviticus 20:26 NIV, **“You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own.”** His Church is to be holy because He has set us apart as holy unto Himself. **Truly, He has saved and called us to a holy life for His own purpose and grace.** Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:9 NIV concerning this:

He has saved us and CALLED US TO A HOLY LIFE—not because of anything we have done but because of HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE. THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

Even before the beginning of time, according to God's own purpose and grace, He predetermined to save and call us to holiness. **When Christ's Church does not live in holiness, we fall short of His grace and purpose. WE ARE CHRIST'S; WE ARE NOT OUR OWN NOR OF THE WORLD.** We are distinct from the world because we are of Christ's kingdom. We are to be like Him—holy. Everything about God is holy—His person, nature, attributes, works, and deeds. A Church without holiness may profess God but not reflect Him.

WITHOUT HOLINESS, THE CHURCH CAN NOT SEE GOD NOR HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. Hebrews 12:14 NKJV says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” **HOLINESS DRESSES US IN CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND GLORY.**

It is His presence and glory that testify that He is God and Lord over all. The beauty of His holiness has the power to draw all peoples unto Him. Neither God nor the world has any use for a compromising, ungodly, unholy, and defiled Church. Such a Church is rejected by God, despised by the world, and useless.

As we understand God's uncompromising requirement for our holiness, we also need to know God's relentless hatred for sin. Redemption from sin is purchased through the sacrifice of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ—the immeasurable and inexpressible price God paid. How can we assume that God will treat sin lightly because of grace? God has provided grace at the cost of His Son's life and blood, and to treat sin lightly, casually or of no great matter is to treat the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world in the same manner. How, then, does God see sins? Hebrews 10:26–31 NKJV speaks of God's wrath and vengeance against willful and continuous sins:

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,**" says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Amid the bombardment of sin and evil already unleashed in the world and covering it in gross darkness, the Church must stand strong in holiness that our light will shine (Isaiah 60). **The *ekklesia* must strengthen our core of holiness against this gross darkness so that we do not compromise no matter how pressurizing the temptations or attacks may be.** We cannot be casual, careless, or indifferent toward the presence of sin in our midst. We must strengthen our core of holiness to always prevail.

Christ hung on the cross to redeem and make us holy as God is holy. It cost the life and blood of the Son of God to make us partakers of His holy nature. Let us live, walk and move in holiness as the Bible urges us.

- “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, **that we may be PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS.**” Hebrews 12:10 NKJV
- “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.**” 2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV
- “And that you put on the **new man which was created according to God, IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS.**” Ephesians 4:24 NKJV
- “**Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:** looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Hebrews 12:14–15 NKJV

PRAYER FOCUS

A. Strengthen the core of your commitment to biblical truth.

1. Commit to know and believe the Word of God.
2. Commit to stand upon the Word of God.
3. Commit to honor and live by the Word of God.
4. Commit to minister the Word of God.

B. Strengthen the core of your obedience to God and His Word.

C. Identify, confess and repent of all areas of disobedience.

1. Pray for a broken heart and contrite spirit before God.
2. Pray to love and obey God as Jesus Christ loved and obeyed His Father.
3. Commit to live to do the will of God because that is our food.

D. Strengthen the core of your character: integrity and faithfulness.

1. Examine, confess and repent of areas in your life and character that are not in alignment with God and His Word.
2. Ask and submit to the inward dealings and workings of the Holy Spirit:
 - a. To reveal and confront sin, defilement, and compromise.

- b. To reveal and confront where you have not adhered to biblical values.
 - c. To reveal and confront areas where you have loved the world.
3. Pray to have a holy passion for integrity and faithfulness in your character.
 - a. To be spiritually and morally sound, complete, and incorruptible by submitting and conforming to God and His Word.
 - b. To have a character that can withstand all attacks and temptations.

E. Strengthen the core of your convictions.

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to search and reveal to you the condition of your inner being.
2. Humbly acknowledge and repent of areas in your heart and conscience that you have defiled.
3. Cry out to God to give you a new heart and conscience to trust, honor and obey Him and His Word.
4. Pray for a deep inner work of the Holy Spirit that:
 - a. God's Word is implanted in your heart.
 - b. Your conscience is held captive by and in alignment with God's Word.
 - c. Conviction according to God's Word grips your heart.
 - d. Pray to be strengthened in godly convictions to stand and withstand all warfare.
5. Pray that the Church be the formidable warship of God;
 - a. Strong in faith, courage, and power.
 - b. Strong in consecration, holiness, and righteousness.
 - c. Strong to obey and prevail in all warfare.

F. Strengthen the core of your holiness.

1. Pray to be gripped with a conviction and passion to be holy as God is holy.
2. Diligently watch and guard your heart that you live a pure and holy life.
3. Live as Christ requires because you are His, not your own.
4. Live holy so that you can see and know Him, and be dressed in His glory.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11: STRENGTHEN YOUR LOVE

1 JOHN 4:7-21 NKJV

BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS OF GOD; AND EVERYONE WHO LOVES IS BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD. He who does not love does not know God, FOR GOD IS LOVE. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** No one has seen God at any time. **IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD ABIDES IN US, AND HIS LOVE HAS BEEN PERFECTED IN US. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. **GOD IS LOVE, AND HE WHO ABIDES IN LOVE ABIDES IN GOD, AND GOD IN HIM.** Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. **WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: **THAT HE WHO LOVES GOD MUST LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO.**

DEUTERONOMY 11:13-15 NKJV

And it shall be that if you EARNESTLY OBEY MY COMMANDMENTS which I command you today, TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.

DEUTERONOMY 13:3-4 NKJV

You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, **for THE LORD YOUR GOD IS TESTING YOU TO KNOW WHETHER YOU LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL.** You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

..... MATTHEW 22:37-40 NKJV

Jesus said to him, **“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”** This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: **“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”** On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (LEB—And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.)

..... MATTHEW 24:9-14 NLT

Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are My followers. And many will turn away from Me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. **Sin will be rampant everywhere, and THE LOVE OF MANY WILL GROW COLD. BUT THE ONE WHO ENDURES TO THE END WILL BE SAVED.** And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

EXHORTATION: STRENGTHEN YOUR LOVE

God Is Love

Love is not just a feeling; LOVE IS A PERSON, JESUS CHRIST. The Bible says God is love. As God is eternal, divine, pure, holy, righteous, and glorious, so is His love. Jesus states in 1 John 4:7-8 NKJV,

Beloved, let us love one another, FOR LOVE IS OF GOD, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, FOR GOD IS LOVE.

Jesus makes it clear that because God is love, everyone born of God knows and loves God. Those who do not know or love God have not received Jesus Christ as their Savior. Nevertheless, God wants all to be born-again in Him and to know Him and His love. Romans 5:8 NKJV states, **“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

GOD’S LOVE SAVES, REDEEMS, DELIVERS, HEALS, MAKES WHOLE, TRANSFORMS, AND BLESSES. His love has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and put us into the kingdom of light of His Son, Jesus Christ. We are saved from sin, death, and hell to become part of His

kingdom as His sons and daughters. His love gives eternal life to all who believe in Him.

God Defines Love Not As The World Does

The devil hates God and hates His love. He seeks to deceive and defraud to prevent people from knowing God and His love. He lies concerning God's love with the aim of causing people to reject God and His love and to hate God. He has defrauded people by lying about God and what love is.

Love is not as the world defines it but how God defines it in His Holy Bible. Other definitions are flawed and lacking in soundness and truth. **Any definition or expression of love that contravenes biblical truth, defies God's nature, desecrates His character, dishonors His name and ways, or violates His commandments is not love.** The source of that definition of love is not of God but of the devil, a liar and accuser. Satan, God's adversary, always seeks to distort and deceive so that he can destroy. The Church must strengthen our love so that we are not deceived but can share God's love with a broken world. The Church must know God and His love and stand firm and immovable on biblical truth. God has given us His power to speak to the world and to show people His love. God and His love are eternal, and they do not change. **A "Christianity" whose God changes according to the world's philosophies, value systems, and trends is false. IT IS NOT OF GOD.** James 1:16–18 NIV states,

DON'T BE DECEIVED, my dear brothers and sisters. **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the FATHER OF THE HEAVENLY LIGHTS, WHO DOES NOT CHANGE LIKE SHIFTING SHADOWS. HE CHOSE TO GIVE US BIRTH THROUGH THE WORD OF TRUTH**, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all He created.

The Church is not to be influenced or misled by the world's definition or practice of love which is held captive by demonic influences. Some define love as, "anything that feels good to the individual, is right." The devil has deceived the world into believing in a love that is without moral, ethical, or biblical boundaries. The thought is that if it feels good and right to the individual, that is love, even if it violates all the boundaries set by God to lead, direct and bless people.

The world considers moral boundaries as inconvenient and, therefore, irrelevant. To them, personal perceptions and choices transcend biblical truths, moral values, and ethicality. As long as the individual feels attached, attracted to, or connected to someone, it is defined as love and

legitimized as right, proper and acceptable. Such definitions go beyond the limits of sanctity and decency—**beyond the boundaries given in the Bible. All biblical boundaries concerning love are not suggestions or ideas. THEY ARE ABSOLUTES, AND THEY REVEAL WHO GOD IS—HIS PERSON, NATURE, WAYS, AND ATTRIBUTES.** His boundaries are not just punitive or judgmental; they are absolute truths that protect and bless us. We should not trespass against them because it will be to our detriment.

God's love saves, sanctifies, delivers, heals, and blesses. Perversion of love is the result of fallen flesh and demonic deception. This warped and degenerated worldview on love has led to the grossest of sins concerning relationships, marriage, and sex. For this reason, same-sex attraction, fornication, adultery, polygamy, incest, sexual perversion, pornography, and even bestiality have been normalized and deemed acceptable by some people. **These practices lead to confusion, darkness, vileness, bondage, depression, destruction, and spiritual death. There is no joy, no peace, and no life.** Paul rebukes believers in Colossians 3:5–6 NIV,

PUT TO DEATH, THEREFORE, WHATEVER BELONGS TO YOUR EARTHLY NATURE: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. BECAUSE OF THESE, THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING.

In the KJV, Paul warns believers about “inordinate affection,” which is undue and unjustifiable affection. They are to put it to death because such affection is out of order according to God’s Word. Many people deceived into believing satan’s lies concerning love and the practice of it often say, “What I am doing is love. What is wrong with love?” All who disagree are accused of being unloving, unkind, bigoted, and non-accepting.

The *ekklesia* must stand strong and immovable concerning biblical love. We must, at all costs, not let anything persuade, pressure, or deceive us into compromising or contradicting God’s Word on love. We must strengthen our passion for God and others. **Love that is of God is merciful, kind, and gracious; IT IS ALSO PURE, HOLY, UPRIGHT, AND RIGHTEOUS. Although limitless and eternal, God’s love DOES NOT CONDONE OR TOLERATE SIN.** May the Church arise to take a stand against this onslaught of satanic assault on God’s love. Only God’s love can save, heal and give eternal life. We must know, believe and stand firm in biblical truth. **We must not allow outward forces, hostility, and hate to cause us to compromise on the truth that God is love.**

Love Is The Greatest—Live In First Love

We must strengthen our love for God and others because love is the greatest. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 NIV stating,

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, **but do not have love, I AM ONLY A RESOUNDING GONG** or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, **but do not have love, I AM NOTHING.** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, **but do not have love, I GAIN NOTHING.** **Love is patient ... DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH ... LOVE NEVER FAILS.** But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away ... **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.**

The two greatest commandments, according to Jesus, are on love—LOVE GOD FIRST AND LOVE OTHERS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES. Matthew 22:37–40 NKJV says,

*Jesus said to him, “**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.**” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

God requires His Church to fear Him, walk in all His ways, and love and serve Him first with all of our hearts, souls, and strength. We are also to love our neighbors as ourselves.

First Love Is Not Natural But Supernatural

What is first love? God rebuked the Church of Ephesus for losing their first love. He warned them to repent from where they had fallen and to return to their first love, or He would come quickly and remove their lampstand. Revelation 2:4–5 NKJV warns against losing our first love.

Nevertheless, I have this AGAINST YOU, that you have LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; REPENT and do the first works, or else I WILL COME TO

**YOU QUICKLY AND REMOVE YOUR LAMPSTAND from its place—
UNLESS YOU REPENT.**

Loving God first is not a suggestion that offers the option to choose to love Him first or not. **GOD REQUIRES HIS CHURCH TO LOVE HIM FIRST. IT IS HIS FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT, WHICH WE MUST OBEY.** First love is not natural but supernatural because it is only the Holy Spirit who can put the love of God in our hearts. Nonetheless, this does not mean we do not have to do our part to obtain first love. It does not mean we remain passive, apathetic, uninterested, lazy, and put in nothing to pursue, seek and search for God. We are deceived if we think that it is all on God to do something and that we do not have to put in any effort to prioritize earnestly pursuing Him.

Before His Holy Spirit does a work in our hearts, GOD REQUIRES US TO SEEK HIM WITH ALL OF OUR HEART, SOUL, AND STRENGTH. He requires us to call on Him, come to Him, pray and search for Him with all that we are; then He will let Himself be found by us. In Jeremiah 29:12–14 LEB, God powerfully speaks to His people concerning pursuing Him.

“Then when you CALL ME, and you COME AND PRAY TO ME, THEN I WILL LISTEN TO YOU. WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME, THEN YOU WILL FIND ME, IF YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. AND I WILL LET MYSELF BE FOUND BY YOU,” declares Yahweh, “and I will restore your fortunes, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have driven you,” declares Yahweh, “and I will bring you back to the place from which I deported you.”

Who and what are we pursuing more than God and His love? IF WE DESIRE AND PURSUE EARTHLY RELATIONSHIPS, PLEASURES, AND PRIORITIES MORE THAN GOD, SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH OUR HEARTS AND CHRISTIANITY. Lukewarmness and the loss of first love for God have been so normalized and deemed acceptable in today’s Christianity that many have lost the awe and fear of God. Hearts have become hardened, and the love of many has grown cold.

MAY WE BE WILLING TO PURSUE GOD TO LOVE HIM FIRST, EVEN AT THE COST OF FORGOING WHAT IS DUE TO US—all that is rightful, justifiable, reasonable, and legitimate by the world’s standards. Are we willing to contend against hunger, flesh, tiredness, sleepless nights, and discomfort so that we may know Him and His love? We must strengthen our love so we do not grow cold, lukewarm, and hardened in our hearts toward God and others.

Strengthening Your Love For God And Others

To strengthen our love for God and others, we must be strong in the following areas:

- **God Is Love: Knowing God And His Love**

1 John 4:7–8 NKJV—“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Matthew 22:37–40 NLT—“Jesus replied, ‘**You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.**’ This is the first and greatest commandment. **A second is equally important: ‘love your neighbor as yourself.** The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.’”

God is the source of love because He is love. When we are born again, we experience God and His love. Therefore, we know God, and we know His love. Consequently, we can love God and others as Jesus commands us.

- **Loving God With All Our Heart** (Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Deuteronomy 11:13; Deuteronomy 10:12; Deuteronomy 13:3)

Mark 12:29–30 NLT—“Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. **And you must love the Lord your God with ALL YOUR HEART,** all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’”

We belong to Jesus Christ, and we are to love Him with all of our hearts. **He must be our first passion, priority, and pursuit in life.** There can be no one and not a thing in our heart that competes with Jesus for the place of pre-eminence.

- **Loving God With All Our Mind**

Mark 12:30 NLT—“You must **love the Lord your God with** all your heart, all your soul, **ALL YOUR MIND,** and all your strength.”

To love God with all our minds is to consistently keep our minds,

thoughts, intention, imagination, comprehension, and understanding on Jesus. Let the remembrance of Him saturate our thinking and affection.

- **Loving God With All Our Strength—Demonstrate Our First Love By Serving Him.**

Mark 12:30 NLT—“You must **love the your God with** all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and **ALL YOUR STRENGTH.**”

We need to love God with all of our ability, power, and might. Love Him with all our strength by giving all to serve Him.

- **Growing In Greater Love** (John 15:3; Eph. 2: 4–5; 1 John 4:17–19)

John 15:12–14 NKJV—“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.** You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

Greater love is defined in John 15:13 as a love that lays down one’s life for the one loved. We are to live in this greater love in which we are willing to lay down our lives for God and others. This sacrificial love is greater, weightier, more fervent and intense, greater in importance, more eminent, powerful and noble, and more extraordinary than any other love.

- **Perfecting God’s Love In Us**

1 John 2:4–6 LEB—“The one who says ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. **But whoever keeps His word, truly in this person the love of God has been perfected.** By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

The Church needs to come to a place where Christ’s love is perfected in us. **It means that our knowledge of God’s love is being refined, developed, enriched, enlarged and improved.** The Holy Spirit works in us to cause our understanding of God and His love to grow in maturity, and fullness. **In this place of being perfected in His love, there is an unwavering faith and overcoming confidence in God. In such knowledge, the Church lives victorious and powerful, fearing nothing. The understanding of God’s**

love is brought to its maturity leading to obedience. **WHEN GOD'S LOVE IS NOT PERFECTED IN US, WE LOVE IMPERFECTLY AND CANNOT LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES.**

May the *ekklesia* remain, dwell, settle, endure, be steadfast in God's love, in obedience to His command.

PRAYER FOCUS

A. Pray to understand that God is love.

1. To remove all barriers to knowing God and His love.
2. To know God and His love through:
 - a. Holy Spirit's revelation.
 - b. Encountering God and His love.
 - c. Intimacy of relationship with God.

B. Pray to love God first.

1. To love God with all of your heart, mind and strength.
2. To grow in greater love and be perfected in God's love.

C. Pray to love others as you love yourself.

D. Pray to stand firm on biblical truth concerning love.

E. Pray for missions—bringing God's love to nations.

1. Cry out to have Christ's love and passion to see the people of nations saved.
2. Cry out for willingness to lay down all to see nations transformed.

F. Pray for revival in all our mission churches and their nations:

1. **Brazil**—Ps. Celina, Bro. Alex.
2. **East Timor**—Ps. Atama + Sis. Mel Vakalabure (arriving in March).
3. **India**—Ps. Prasantha + Sis. Roshika, Sis. Verma.
4. **Ireland**
 - Dublin—Ps. Jamie + Sis. Lud Corcoran.
 - Navan—Ps. Sam + Sis. Sara Corcoran.

5. **Japan**

- **Kamaishi**—Ps. Keizo + Sis. Mami Yoshioka.
- **Okinawa**—Sis. Miyuki, Sis. Fuji, Sis. Kumiko, Bro. Nakamura.
- **Osaka**—Ps. Atsuya + Sis. Takako Miyashita.
- **Yokohama**—Ps. Kyoko Koyama, Sis. Sayaka + Bro. Victor Groves.

6. **Korea (North & South)**—wisdom for Ps. Ko and Ps. Ernie to raise mission teams.

7. **Marshall Islands**

- **Delap**—Bro. Mike Larron.
- **Ulga**—Bro. Aichy Hanchor.

8. **Mexico**

- **Huamantla**—Ps. Miriam, Ps. Quechol, Sis. Mimi, Sis. Hudid, Bro. Francisco + Sis. Fernanda.
- **Ixtenco**—Bro. Miguel, Sis. Fabia.

9. **Philippines**—Ps. Orlando + Sis. Natalie Bernales, Sis. Princess Bernales.

10. **Samoa**—Ps. Mila + Sis. Rosie Tongamoa, Bro. Sola + Sis. Peta, Bro. James.

11. **Uganda**—Ps. Elijah + Sis. Ruth Mabala, Ps. Moses, Ps. Paul, Ps. Jonathan.

12. **United Kingdom**—Ps. Timothy + Sis. Angela Dorjey.

13. **United States**

- **Hamakua**—Ps. Jacob + Sis. Hoku Fesagaiga, Ps. Maize Luke.
- **Marshallese Churches**—Ps. Absen + Sis. Sherlina Ebot.

G. Pray to raise and send out more Gideonite (church-planting) teams—Kyushu and Nagasaki.

H. Pray for salvation, revival and transformation in the United States.

Notes:

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12: STRENGTHEN YOUR PRAYERS

JEREMIAH 29:12–14 LEB

*“Then when you call Me, and you come and pray to Me, then I will listen to you. **WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME, THEN YOU WILL FIND ME, IF YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. AND I WILL LET MYSELF BE FOUND BY YOU,**” declares Yahweh, “and I will restore your fortunes, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have driven you,” declares Yahweh, “and I will bring you back to the place from which I deported you.”*

PROVERBS 8:17 NKJV

I LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE ME, AND THOSE WHO SEEK ME DILIGENTLY WILL FIND ME.

EPHESIANS 6:18 NKJV

PRAYING ALWAYS WITH ALL PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION IN THE SPIRIT, being watchful to this end with ALL PERSEVERANCE AND SUPPLICATION for all the saints.

JAMES 5:16–18 NKJV

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **THE EFFECTIVE, FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–19 ESV

Rejoice always. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

COLOSSIANS 4:2–4 NKJV

CONTINUE EARNESTLY IN PRAYER, BEING VIGILANT IN IT WITH THANKSGIVING; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

LUKE 18:1–5 ESV

And He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor

respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, **'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that SHE WILL NOT BEAT ME DOWN BY HER CONTINUAL COMING.'**"

EXHORTATION: STRENGTHEN YOUR PRAYERS

The Power Of Prayer

PRAYER IS A TURNING TO GOD, REACHING OUT for Him, SEEKING Him, and CALLING on Him, be it in WORDS, TEARS, GROANING, AGONIZING, WORSHIPPING, WAITING, OR LISTENING. Those who love God will diligently seek God in prayer. God states in **Jeremiah 29:13 ESV**, **"You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart."**

WHEN A PASSION TO KNOW GOD CONSUMES US, WE WILL BE CONSUMED WITH A HUNGER TO PRAY because, in prayer, we are seeking, pursuing, and running hard after Him. We will cry out to Him day and night giving Him no rest because our hearts burn with a fire to see, know, love, and please Him. We will be love-sick for Him, convinced that nothing can compare with Him or satisfy us. **This passion is a hunger for Him that will drive us to our knees, cause us to lose all other appetites, and disrupt our life, schedule, and earthly priorities to lay hold of Him.** Esther understood this hunger when she called the Jews exiled in Persia with her into three days of prayer and fasting to seek God. Moses experienced this hunger when he waited on God for forty days and nights in prayer and fasting, pleading with God to show him His glory.

THIS HUNGER FOR GOD CANNOT BE EASED UNTIL IN PRAYER WE SEE HIM FACE TO FACE. Then He speaks to us as a man to a friend disclosing and revealing Himself to us in the most profound intimacy. God is seeking such intercessors to stand in the gap before Him for the nations. Samuel Chadwick, a Wesleyan Methodist minister, was a Spirit-filled preacher, revivalist, and author. He was also a mighty man of prayer and intercession who knew how to lay hold of God through prayer. He said,

THERE IS NO POWER LIKE THAT OF PREVAILING PRAYER, of Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heartbroken with remorse and grief, Jesus in sweat of blood. Add to this list from the records of the church your personal observation and experience, and **ALWAYS THERE IS THE COST**

OF PASSION UNTO BLOOD. SUCH PRAYER PREVAILS. IT TURNS ORDINARY MORTALS INTO MEN OF POWER. IT BRINGS POWER. IT BRINGS FIRE. IT BRINGS RAIN. IT BRINGS LIFE. IT BRINGS GOD.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRAYER.

We Must Awake, Arise And Stir Up Ourselves To Pray As Jesus Prayed

The *ekklesia* must sleep no more but awake and arise to seek God passionately, relentlessly, and single-heartedly. **We must be willing to CRUCIFY THE FLESH, DISCIPLINE AND STIR UP OURSELVES to pray as Jesus prayed. Samuel Chadwick said, “ALWAYS THERE IS THE COST OF PASSION UNTO BLOOD. SUCH PRAYER PREVAILS.** It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. **It brings God.”**

We must pray as Jesus prayed to His Father while He was on earth. IN PRAYER, JESUS WAS ONE WITH HIS FATHER—He drew from His Father’s presence, love, power, comfort, and strength. **His prayer life was His lifeline to His Father and the Holy Spirit.** He would not do anything on His own but always depended on the Father, hearing the Father, and obeying the Father. **EVERYTHING THAT JESUS NEEDED FROM HIS FATHER CAME THROUGH HIS PRAYER LIFE.** The Bible teaches of His persistent and powerful life of prayer and His earnestness, zeal, relentlessness, and intensity in seeking His Father.

“In the days of His flesh, **JESUS OFFERED UP PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATION, WITH LOUD CRIES AND TEARS, TO HIM WHO WAS ABLE TO SAVE HIM FROM DEATH,** and He was heard because of His reverence.” Hebrews 5:7 ESV

- **“And being in agony, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”** Luke 22:44 ESV
- **“After He had sent the crowds away, HE WENT UP ON THE MOUNTAIN BY HIMSELF TO PRAY;** and when it was evening, He was there alone.” Matthew 14:23 NET
- **“It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, AND HE SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT IN PRAYER TO GOD.”** Luke 6:12 NASB 1995

- “In the early morning, while it was still dark, **JESUS GOT UP, LEFT THE HOUSE, AND WENT AWAY TO A SECLUDED PLACE, AND WAS PRAYING THERE.**” Mark 1:35 NASB 1995

Cry Out To God That He Will Give Us No Rest Until We Pray As Jesus Prayed

We must be a follower of Jesus in prayer—paying the price to pray as He prayed. The *ekklesia* must no longer be in a spiritual slumber. We must awake and arise to seek Him in persistent and fervent prayer and fasting. We must cry out to God to give us a desperation for Him. Let us call upon Him for His Holy Spirit to do such a deep work in our innermost being that we are greatly disturbed and brokenhearted over prayerlessness. **MAY HE GIVE US NO REST UNTIL OUR SOULS BURN WITH A PASSION TO PRAY BECAUSE OF A PASSION FOR HIM.** It is in prayer that His fire purifies and sets us ablaze for Him. His power infuses us that we can do the supernatural naturally. His love consumes us so that we crush fear and prevail over all forces of darkness through faith in Him. **In prayer, God’s power, presence, and glory make us Church Strong!**

Sometimes Christ’s *ekklesia* neglects prayer not because there has been no form of prayer, rather, **the Church lacks the fervent prayer that causes us to lay down our lives to lay a hold of God. IN TRUTH, MERELY-DUTIFUL, LUKEWARM, AND TOKEN PRAYING IS PRAYERLESSNESS.**

The Discipline And The Cost To Strengthen Our Prayers

We not only need a prayer life, WE MUST HAVE A LIFE OF PRAYER. Jesus had a life of prayer, not a prayer life. We need to make a choice to have a life of prayer that fills our spirit, soul, and life. **IT COMES WITH DISCIPLINE AND A COST.** The discipline of prayer is not just a gift or talent. God gives us His grace to help us as we discipline ourselves to pray. The essence of discipline and the cost is found in this call from Jesus in John 12:23–26 ESV,

And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE EARTH AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES, IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT.** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **IF ANYONE SERVES ME, HE MUST FOLLOW ME;** and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

Death to self is the discipline and cost of learning to pray as Jesus prayed. **When we have Christ's passion for prayer, our passion and hunger for God will override all other passion and hunger. EVERYTHING ELSE IS BEING SWALLOWED UP BY THE HUNGER FOR GOD.** Nothing has a hold on us except God. We are willing to be that grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies in order to lay hold of God.

Discipline requires us to forcefully resist and overcome anything that obstructs prayer. If necessary, we must be willing to battle until bloodshed against sin, flesh, and temptation to triumph in prayer. Hebrews 12:4 NASB says, **"You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin."** (NLT: **After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.**) Samuel Chadwick said, **"The school of prayer has its conditions and demands. It is a forbidden place to all but those of set purpose and resolute heart."** He also said these things about prayer.

- **"To pray as God would have us pray is the greatest achievement of earth. Such a life costs. It takes time."**
- **"If prayer is the greatest achievement on earth, we may be sure it will call for a discipline that corresponds to its power."**

Strengthening Our Prayers: Intercession And Spiritual Warfare

Chadwick also declared, **"What is love if it be not fiery? WHAT ARE PRAYERS IF THE HEART BE NOT ABLAZE? THEY ARE THE BATTLES OF THE SOUL."** Let the Church awake, and arise to pray as Jesus prayed. **May prayers of the ekklesia surge out of a fiery love for God and hearts set aflame for Him.**

▪ Praying Strong With Unquenching Fervor

Strong and fervent prayers are prayers of faith. They are filled with boldness to ask, declare, and decree God's Word and will continue until these things are established. Such prayers are vehement and courageous to withstand all adversities, pressures, and spiritual opposition by pushing them back and rendering them powerless to influence, hinder or hurt. They see to it that God's kingdom comes and His will is done.

1 Kings 17:1 NKJV—And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, **"As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom**

I stand, **there shall not be dew nor rain these years, EXCEPT AT MY WORD.**”

James 5:16–18 NKJV—Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **THE EFFECTIVE, FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

1 Kings 18:36–39 NKJV—And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. **Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God,** and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” **Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice,** and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. **Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “THE LORD, HE IS GOD! THE LORD, HE IS GOD!”**”

- **Praying Long With Persistence And Perseverance**

To pray long is to pray with unyielding persistence and perseverance until we see the end intended by the Lord. James 5:11 speaks of how Job persevered in great adversities until he was able to see the “end intended by the Lord” for him. The Lord blessed Job double-fold. **THE CHURCH MUST LEARN IN PRAYER TO KEEP COMING TO GOD OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND THEN AGAIN. We must pray long with persistence, and perseverance until the “end intended by the Lord” are established.**

James 5:11 NKJV—Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the **perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord**—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Ephesians 6:18 NKJV—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end **WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE AND SUPPLICATION** for all the saints.

Hebrews 10:35–38 NKJV—Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. **FOR YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE**, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16–19 ESV—Rejoice always. **PRAY WITHOUT CEASING**, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

Colossians 4:2–4 NKJV—**CONTINUE EARNESTLY IN PRAYER, BEING VIGILANT IN IT WITH THANKSGIVING**; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Luke 18:1–5 ESV—And He told them a parable to the effect that **THEY OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY AND NOT LOSE HEART**. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘**Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that SHE WILL NOT BEAT ME DOWN BY HER CONTINUAL COMING.**’”

- **Prayers Of Faith**

The only solid foundation of prayer of faith is TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD ALONE. Prayer of faith has no room for doubtful thinking of “if” or “what if.” **FAITH OVERCOMES ALL OBSTACLES AND GAINS THE PLEASURE AND FAVOR OF GOD**, as did the woman from Canaan pressing in on Jesus to plead for deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter. **Jesus called her a woman of great faith, and BECAUSE OF HER EARNEST FAITH, SHE PREVAILED WITH GOD, and her daughter was made well.**

Matthew 15:21–28 NKJV—Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have

mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” But He answered and said, **“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” THEN SHE CAME AND WORSHIPED HIM, SAYING, “LORD, HELP ME!”** But He answered and said, **“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”** And she said, **“YES, LORD, YET EVEN THE LITTLE DOGS EAT THE CRUMBS WHICH FALL FROM THEIR MASTERS’ TABLE.”** Then Jesus answered and said to her, **“O WOMAN, GREAT IS YOUR FAITH! LET IT BE TO YOU AS YOU DESIRE.”** And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Mark 11:22–24 NKJV—So Jesus answered and said to them, **“HAVE FAITH IN GOD.** For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and **DOES NOT DOUBT IN HIS HEART, BUT BELIEVES that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.** Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

- **Prayers Of Petition And Intercession**

1 John 5:14–15 NKJV—Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, **THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US.** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, **WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE HAVE ASKED OF HIM.**

1 Timothy 2:1–4 NIV—I urge, then, first of all, that **PETITIONS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING** be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. **THIS IS GOOD, AND PLEASES GOD OUR SAVIOR,** who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

- **Prayers Of Thanksgiving**

Philippians 4:6–7 NASB 1995—Be anxious for nothing, but **IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING,** let your requests be made known to God; and

the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- **Prayers Of Spiritual Warfare**

The *ekklesia* must be willing to engage in spiritual warfare with the mighty weapons of God. Chadwick spoke of how the adversary fears the prayers of the Church, **“THE ONE CONCERN OF THE DEVIL IS TO KEEP CHRISTIANS FROM PRAYING. HE FEARS NOTHING FROM PRAYERLESS STUDIES, PRAYERLESS WORK, AND PRAYERLESS RELIGION. HE LAUGHS AT OUR TOIL, MOCKS AT OUR WISDOM, BUT TREMBLES WHEN WE PRAY.”**

2 Corinthians 10:3–6 NKJV—For though we walk in the flesh, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. For the WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE are not carnal but MIGHTY IN GOD for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

To be Church Strong, we must strengthen our prayers.

- **“There has never been a SPIRITUAL AWAKENING in any country or locality that did not BEGIN IN UNITED PRAYER.”** D.A.T. Pierson
- “Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but **THEY ARE HELPLESS AGAINST OUR PRAYERS.**” J. Sidlow Baxter
- **“What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men who the Holy Spirit can use—MEN OF PRAYER, MEN MIGHTY IN PRAYER. THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES NOT COME ON MACHINERY BUT ON MEN. HE DOES NOT ANOINT PLANS, BUT MEN—MEN OF PRAYER.”** E. M. Bounds
- **“To get nations back on their feet, WE MUST FIRST GET DOWN ON OUR KNEES.”** Billy Graham.

PRAYER FOCUS

- A. In humility repent of apathy and prayerlessness.**
- B. Pray that the Church obeys in being a house of prayer for nations.**
- C. Stir yourself up to pray as Jesus prayed.**
- D. Set your heart to diligently seek and call upon God in prayer.**
1. Pray for an all-consuming hunger and passion for God.
 2. Pray for a fervor to seek Him until you see Him face to face.
 3. Pray to encounter Him in the most profound intimacy.
- E. Consecrate and commit to a life of prayer.**
- Ask for grace to resist and overcome all obstructions to prayer.
 - Prepare to battle until you triumph in prayer.
 - Strengthen the following areas of prayer:
 1. **Strengthen your prayers of intercession and spiritual warfare.**
 - a. Strengthen your intercession for all that the Holy Spirit places on your heart.
 - b. Strengthen your spiritual warfare as directed by the Holy Spirit:
 - to prevail in pulling down strongholds.
 - to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.
 - to obtain breakthroughs and miracles.
 - to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.
 2. **Strengthen in praying with persistence and perseverance.**
 - a. Pray unceasingly and with endurance.
 - b. Pray until God's will is fulfilled and His work is done.
 3. **Strengthen your prayer of faith and boldness expecting answers from God.**
 4. **Strengthen your prayer of petition and intercession.** Request by faith and with thanksgiving concerning all needs. Expect miracles.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13: STRENGTHEN YOURSELF IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PROVERBS 24:10 NIV

If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength! (NASB—If you show yourself lacking courage on the day of distress, your strength is meager.)

JEREMIAH 12:5 CEB

If you have raced with people and are worn out, HOW WILL YOU COMPETE WITH HORSES? If you fall down in an open field, HOW WILL YOU SURVIVE IN THE FOREST ALONG THE JORDAN? (NLT—If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?)

PHILIPPIANS 4:11–13 LEB

*Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **I KNOW HOW** both to make do with little and I know how to have an abundance. **IN EVERYTHING AND IN ALL THINGS I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET** both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have an abundance and to go without. **I AM ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS BY THE ONE WHO STRENGTHENS ME.***

ACTS 1:8 NKJV

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.

ZECHARIAH 4:6–7 NLT

*Then He said to me, "This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: **It is not by force nor by strength, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAYS THE LORD OF HEAVEN'S ARMIES. NOTHING, not even a mighty mountain, WILL STAND IN ZERUBBABEL'S WAY; it will become a level plain before him!** And when Zerubbabel sets the final stone of the Temple in place, the people will shout: 'May God bless it! May God bless it!'"*

EPHESIANS 6:10–18 NIV

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. THEREFORE PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT**

WHEN THE DAY OF EVIL COMES, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND YOUR GROUND, AND AFTER YOU HAVE DONE EVERYTHING, TO STAND. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **AND PRAY IN THE SPIRIT ON ALL OCCASIONS WITH ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS AND REQUESTS. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.**

..... **EPHESIANS 3:16 NKJV**

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN.**

..... **HABAKKUK 3:19 NKJV**

The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.

..... **PSALM 84:4-7 NIV**

Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE STRENGTH IS IN YOU, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.** As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. **THEY GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH, TILL EACH APPEARS BEFORE GOD IN ZION.**

..... **PSALM 73:25-26 NKJV**

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. **My flesh and my heart fail; but GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY PORTION FOREVER.**

..... **ISAIAH 25:4 NKJV**

For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

..... **ISAIAH 41:10 NKJV**

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. **I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you,** I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

..... **1 CHRONICLES 29:12 NKJV**

Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power

and might; in **Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.**

PSALM 18:32 NKJV

IT IS GOD WHO ARMS ME WITH STRENGTH, and makes my way perfect.

PSALM 28:7-8 NKJV

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him. The LORD is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed.

PSALM 71:16 NKJV

I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

ISAIAH 40:25-31 NLT

“To whom will you compare Me? Who is My equal?” asks the Holy One. Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. **BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT POWER AND INCOMPARABLE STRENGTH, NOT A SINGLE ONE IS MISSING.** O Jacob, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? **Have you never heard? Have you never understood? THE LORD IS THE EVERLASTING GOD, the Creator of all the earth. HE NEVER GROWS WEAK OR WEARY.** No one can measure the depths of His understanding. **HE GIVES POWER TO THE WEAK AND STRENGTH TO THE POWERLESS.** Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. **BUT THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD WILL FIND NEW STRENGTH. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.**

**EXHORTATION:
STRENGTHEN YOURSELF IN THE POWER OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

The ekklesia must be Church Strong, especially for the days to come. If we feel these days are very difficult, the days ahead will be more challenging and extremely tough, especially for followers of Jesus Christ. Our struggle and battle are not against things in the natural or flesh and blood. **WE ARE WARRING AGAINST SPIRITUAL POWERS OF DARKNESS AND SATANIC FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS.** These are satanic principalities, rulers, authorities, and evil forces in high places that battle against the Church (Ephesians 6:12).

We will not win this war by natural strength, power, knowledge, strategies or abilities. **ONLY ONE STRENGTH CAN ARM US TO STAND, WITHSTAND AND OVERCOME ALL COMBINED FORCES OF THE GATES OF HELL— THAT IS THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The Holy Spirit can arm and equip the *ekklesia* with power and strength to be the mighty weapon in God's hands to prevail. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:10–13 NIV,

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can TAKE YOUR STAND AGAINST THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **Therefore PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able TO STAND YOUR GROUND, and after you have done everything, TO STAND.**

There is NO OPTION BUT TO BE STRONG IN THE LORD and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, as the Son of Man, was conceived, filled, empowered, and led by the Holy Spirit to obey, fulfill and complete the Father's will and work while contending against satan and all his attacks, strategies and temptations. Jesus prevailed and accomplished the Father's will in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He commanded His disciples in Acts 1:4–8 NLT,

Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days **YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT...YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON YOU.** And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

For this reason, WE MUST PRAY MORE and not less, SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS, and not just sometimes, KNOW GOD AND HIS WORD ALWAYS, and not just hear.

In the Bible, people of faith had gone before us and prevailed in the strength of the Holy Spirit. THEY ARE OUR WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH THAT THE STRENGTH OF GOD NEVER FAILS BUT WILL ENABLE US TO PREVAIL OVER ALL. They had faced situations that were impossible for any human to meet. Nevertheless, they had endured and overcome. **THEY SOUGHT THE LORD AND DID IT ALL IN THE STRENGTH OF GOD.**

- Joseph endured and prevailed over years of suffering, persecution, and imprisonment.
- Daniel stood and prevailed when threatened with death in the lions' den if he continued to pray.
- Daniel's three friends stood their ground, honoring God as they faced death in a fiery furnace for refusing to bow to the idol erected by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Hannah prevailed over years of barrenness as she cried out to God for a son.
- Job overcame even death because he knew that his Redeemer lived.
- Noah obeyed as he found grace in the eyes of God and built the Ark.
- Paul, by faith, suffered the loss of all things to gain the knowledge of God.

It Is The Holy Spirit Who Strengthens Our Core To Stand, Withstand And Prevail

It is not by any earthly power, strength, might, ability or force—be it individually or combined—that we can stand, withstand and prevail today and in the days to come. **It is by the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Every other strength will utterly fail and fall short of accomplishing the things of God. IN THE STRENGTH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE CAN DO ALL THINGS, ENDURE ALL THINGS, AND OVERCOME ALL THINGS.** For this reason, Paul declared he delighted in his weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties. Although he was weak in himself, in Christ he was made strong to overcome in all things. Paul affirmed in 2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul had learned the secret of having an overcoming strength in every situation. Nothing could defeat his faith, deflate his joy or diminish his hope in God—not prison, shipwreck, stoning, beating, hate, hunger, accusation, persecution, rejection, nor things past, present, or future—nothing in heaven or on earth. **BECAUSE OF THE STRENGTH OF GOD WORKING IN HIM NOTHING COULD CAUSE PAUL TO SLACK, WITHDRAW OR STOP LOVING, OBEYING, AND SERVING JESUS CHRIST.** Paul was consistently and enduringly faithful, committed, and zealous for God in everything and all times. By the strength of the Holy Spirit, Paul obeyed God fully in good times and hard times, in peace and peril, in freedom and imprisonment, and in joy and pain. **Through his faith in God, THE ALMIGHTY GAVE HIM THIS SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH**

TO OVERCOME ALL, so that he declared in **Philippians 4:13 LEB**, **“I AM ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS BY THE ONE WHO STRENGTHENS ME.”** By God’s strength, nothing shook, fazed, or stopped Paul as he lived for God. **THIS SAME STRENGTH IS MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST.** It is the strength of God. It is the strength of the Holy Spirit that enables the *ekklesia* to be Church Strong.

Our weaknesses, limitations, frailty, and inadequacies are absolutely inconsequential to the Holy Spirit. He is the one who strengthens His *ekklesia* to do all things. All negativities, impossibilities, issues, problems, and demonic obstructions are impotent to intimidate, silence, hinder or stop Christ’s Church that is filled, empowered, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to love and obey God. **The Holy Spirit is Lord God Almighty, and He rules, reigns, and triumphs over all forever.** Zechariah 4:6–7 NLT declares,

Then He said to me, “This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: **IT IS NOT BY FORCE NOR BY STRENGTH, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAYS THE LORD OF HEAVEN’S ARMIES. Nothing, not even a mighty mountain, will stand in Zerubbabel’s way; IT WILL BECOME A LEVEL PLAIN BEFORE HIM!** And when Zerubbabel sets the final stone of the Temple in place, the people will shout: ‘May God bless it! May God bless it!’”

Seek God With All Of Our Heart And Might; He Will Listen And Be Found By Us

SOMETHING HAS TO CHANGE IN THE WAY WE HAVE BEEN APPROACHING GOD. It is time to take heed and seek God with all of our heart and might, and He will strengthen us with the power of His Holy Spirit. Have we been seeking and searching for God with such passion and hunger that nothing else matters but Him? **HAVE WE PRAYED TO HIM AS PEOPLE GRIPPED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT NOTHING CAN REPLACE GOD AND NOTHING ELSE WILL DO?** There is a level of experiencing, knowing, and seeing God that we have not yet attained. It is the level at which Jesus Himself lived and walked, as did Daniel, Moses, and Paul. It only comes by seeking and searching for Him as they did. **EVERYTHING FINDS ITS ANSWER IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.** He will let Himself be found by those who seek and search for Him. **God promises in Jeremiah 29:12–14 LEB,**

“Then when you CALL ME, and YOU COME AND PRAY TO ME, then

I WILL LISTEN TO YOU. WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME, THEN YOU WILL FIND ME, IF YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. AND I WILL LET MYSELF BE FOUND BY YOU,” declares Yahweh, “and I will restore your fortunes, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have driven you,” declares Yahweh, “and I will bring you back to the place from which I deported you.”

May we, the Church pray, seek, and search for God. He promises that He will listen and let Himself be found of us. His Holy Spirit will strengthen our core with His power, might, force and ability. Then the *ekklesia* will be Church Strong with these things:

- Strength to stand, live, walk and obey God against all warfare as Jesus did.
- Strength to stand and withstand all attacks on God, biblical truth, righteousness, and faith as Daniel did.
- Strength to resist and overcome by faith all insufferable satanic attacks as Job did.
- Strength to confess, honor and obey Jesus Christ in the face of death as Stephen did.
- Strength to believe, hope and trust when under the combined assaults of demonic forces as the Early Church did.
- Strength that gives hope in the most hopeless situation.
- Strength that emboldens in the face of terror and dread.
- Strength that comforts amid rejection, abandonment, and loneliness.
- Strength that produces confidence amid impossibilities.
- Strength that causes faith to believe that giants are still being slain, strongholds are still being loosed, dead are still being raised, and that God is still at work in ways sometimes unseen to the natural eye.

May we, the Church seek, search and call upon God unceasingly that His Holy Spirit will come and continuously fill, empower and strengthen us to overcome in all things.

PRAYER FOCUS

A. Hunger and thirst after the Holy Spirit.

B. Pray and seek for the Holy Spirit.

C. Repent of and remove all obstructions to the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

1. Lack of hunger, thirst or desire for the Holy Spirit.
2. Ignorance and indifference towards the Holy Spirit.
3. Apathy and lukewarmness in relationship with the Holy Spirit.
4. Failure to honor, respect, and love the Holy Spirit.
5. Grieving the Holy Spirit:
 - a. Disobedience to God's Word and the Holy Spirit's conviction.
 - b. Presumptuousness towards the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Defiling of His holy temple, your body.
 - d. Sins and trespasses especially against Him.

D. Rededication and recommitment to the Holy Spirit

1. To be filled and never to presume on Him.
2. To love, honor and obey Him always.
3. To be sensitive to Him and not ignore or grieve Him.
4. To give Him first place in your life.
5. To treat His gifts with care, honor and respect.

E. The Church to live, move and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

F. Pray for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

1. For the Church to be hungry, thirsty and desperate for the Holy Spirit.
2. For the Church to pray, seek and search for God in relentless prayer.
3. For the Church to be strengthened in the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. For a mighty outpouring of Holy Spirit upon
 - a. Church.
 - b. Community.
 - c. Nation.

5. **For revival fires to break out over the nations of the world.**

Notes:

PRAY FOR OUR PASTORS & CHURCH PLANTS

SENIOR PASTOR & FAMILY

Klayton + Sharon Ko

Christalyn + Emmanuel Orupabo, Joshua + Kimberly Ko, Jason Ko

STAFF PASTORS & SPOUSES

Bill Bannister

Francine + JR Cabbab

Horace + Talei Chee-Manuia

Ernie + Siew Peng Chow

Sam + Lorna Cockett

Mel + Jennifer Corpuz

Absen + Sherlina Ebot

Jacob + Hoku Fesagaiga

Frederick + Sandra Harris

Chad + Angela Germany

Joshua + Kimberly Ko

Trenton + Courtney Oshiro

Chizuko + Tyrone Peebles

Shyju + Reena Sathyanesan

Raymond + Eva So

Scott + Debbie Sonoda

Frank + Tomiyo Toole

Atama + Melanie Vakalalabure

Andrew + Karen Yasuhara

CHURCH PLANTS & MISSIONARIES

BRAZIL

First Assembly of God Brazil

Ps. Celina Takahashi, Bro. Alex

EAST TIMOR

East Timor Assembly

Ps. Atama + Sis. Mel Vakalalabure (arr. in March)

INDIA

National Overseer

Ps. Prasantha + Sis. Roshika, Sis. Verma

First Gomti Nagar Fellowship AOG

Sis. Sonika Verma

IRELAND

Lighthouse Community Church Dublin

Ps. Jamie + Sis. Lud Corcoran

Lighthouse Community Church Navan

Ps. Sam + Sis. Sara Corcoran

JAPAN

Aloha Assembly Kirigaoka Christ Church

Ps. Kyoko Koyama,

Sis. Sayaka + Bro. Victor Groves

Amazing Grace Center Kamaishi

Ps. Keizo + Sis. Mami Yoshioka

Okinawa City Church

Sis. Miyuki, Sis. Fuji, Sis. Kumiko, Bro. Nakamura

Osaka Bible Church

Ps. Atsuya + Ps. Takako Miyashita

MARSHALL ISLANDS

First Assembly of God Marshall Islands

Delap—Bro. Mike Larron

Ulīga—Bro. Aichy Hanchor

MEXICO

First Assembly of God Huamantla

Ps. Miriam, Ps. Quechol, Sis. Mimi, Sis. Hudid,

Bro. Francisco + Sis. Fernanda

First Assembly of God Ixtenco

Bro. Miguel, Sis. Fabia

PHILIPPINES

First Assembly of God Bohol

Ps. Orlando + Sis. Natalie Bernales,

Sis. Princess Bernales

SAMOA

First Assembly of God Faleula

Ps. Mila + Sis. Rosie Tongamoa,

Bro. Sola + Sis. Peta, Bro. James

UGANDA

Mbale City Church

Ps. Elijah + Sis. Ruth Mabala, Ps. Moses,

Ps. Paul, Ps. Jonathan

UNITED KINGDOM

London Family Center

Ps. Timothy + Sis. Angela Dorjey

UNITED STATES

First Assembly of God Hamakua

Ps. Jacob + Sis. Hoku Fesagaiga, Ps. Maize Luke

Marshallese Churches

Ps. Absen + Sis. Sherlina Ebot



First Assembly of God