



10-DAY DEVOTIONAL PRAYER GUIDE ABOUT CHURCH VITALITY:

## “Christ and His Church”

*Gleanings from select scripture passages in the Old Testament and New Testament*

**by Rev. Rick Fisher**



### WRITER'S BIO

Rev. Rick Fisher is Vice-President of Blackaby Ministries International. Prior to joining Blackaby Ministries, Rick served as pastor of several churches, among them being 10 years at Lexington Baptist Church (SC). He is a frequent speaker on topics related to spiritual leadership, revival/awakening, prayer/prayer ministry, building a godly legacy in the home and other ministry-related topics. In writing this prayer, he utilizes themes and statements found in the Blackaby's Flickering Lamps material and builds a prayer focus for the local church to embrace and experience together.

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NOTES

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Day 1 Preparing for a Significant Movement of God  
Rick Fisher

Read II Chronicles 7:14

*"If My people, who are called by My name. will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (KJV)*

The primary way God works in the world to achieve His purposes is through His people, the church. Henry Blackaby, in his book *What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches*, states: "God is always at work around us, and He personally communicates His will to His people, inviting each church to join in His activity in specific ways." It is not the role of the church to determine what we want to do for God because He already knows what He is purposing. When we hear His voice, understand where He is inviting us to join Him in His work and respond in obedience, He will release His power in us to accomplish His purposes through us.

If God's people are oriented to His voice, they will be used mightily by Him. But, if they are not oriented to His voice, there will be no power and nothing of eternal value will be accomplished. The church must move beyond the opinions of people and be led by the mind of Christ. Otherwise, the entire mission of the people of God will be in jeopardy.

To experience a fresh moving of God among His people, we must prepare our hearts for a fresh encounter with the person, mind, and heart of God. Today, let us focus on being still before the Lord, parking our hearts in His presence for an extended period of time. He has will draw near to us (James 4:8).

Prayer

Father, we need to hear from You. As we draw near to You by reading Your Word and praying Your Word, we ask that You reveal Your character, Your ways, Your purposes to us in fresh and powerful ways. (Psalm 27:8, 145:18; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Hebrews 10:19-22, 11:6; Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:7-12; I Corinthians 2:10; II Corinthians 3:5)

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Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Day 2

Repentance  
Rick Fisher

Read Isaiah 59:1-2

*"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God: and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."*

We began our devotional prayer journey on Day One by seeking to know God more fully; especially to know His character, who He is. As we see God for who He is, we begin to see ourselves for who we are. When Isaiah encountered God (Isaiah 6), he experienced God's holiness, the centerpiece of His character. Isaiah's first reaction was to see himself in light of a holy God: "woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

God intends for His people to walk in fellowship with Him and in this love relationship, He speaks to reveal His purposes, plans and ways. But scripture reminds us that there is a problem in the relationship and the problem is that our sin separates from God and the awareness of His presence. Isaiah 59:1 clearly states that the issue is not with God, but with us.

Do you sense you are hearing from God, that you have an awareness of His presence? Does your church have a clear understanding about what God is saying to you and how He is calling you to join Him and His work? Do you view life from God's perspective? Could it be there is unconfessed sin in the lives of God's people that is preventing hearing His voice, sensing His presence, and knowing His will?

God waits for us to adjust our lives to His standards before He chooses to speak to us. The first step in our adjusting is repentance, agreeing with God about our sin, naming the sin before Him and seeking His forgiveness.

Prayer

God, we have sinned against You. Search our hearts. Reveal our sin as individuals and as a church. As You show us our sin, we will repent and turn from that sin, seek Your forgiveness and cleansing so You can do a fresh work in and through us. (Psalm 139:23-24; I John 1:8-9; Malachi 3:7)





## “Christ and His Church”

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Day 5

Christ’s Purpose for His Church

Rick Fisher

Read Revelation 2:4-5

*“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.”*

In their book, *Flickering Lamps*, Henry and Richard Blackaby state the scriptures teach that God has three primary purposes for the Church: to glorify God, make disciples and bless their community. As God’s people seek to live out His purposes, the Holy Spirit helps each church pursue these purposes given their unique circumstances and the gifts of the people Christ has placed in His church.

In Revelation 2, Christ had a harsh word for the church at Ephesus. While they were doing many things well, they had lost the focus on their “first love”, the relationship with their Head! Christ challenged the Ephesian Christians to remember their first calling, repent of their sin and return to the primacy of their love relationship with Him. Out of that relationship, He would lead them into fulfilling His purposes in His ways.

Following Christ as the head means we evaluate everything we do in light of the primary purposes He has for His church. While we may do many good things, are they accomplishing the purposes for which we exist? Henry Blackaby states: “Churches bring God glory when they focus on what He cares about – when they act, talk, and look like Christ.”

### Prayer

Father, we know it is Your desire that we live out Your purposes for us as individual believers and as a church. Forgive us for being distracted by secondary matters. Give us a heart to remember Your words, repent of our sin and pursue only the works that glorify You. (Psalm 86:11-12; Romans 11:36; Mark 12:29-30; Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 5:13-16; Jeremiah 29:7)

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Day 6

Christ's Plans for His Church

Rick Fisher

Read Isaiah 55:8-9

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways", says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'."*

Christ not only has purposes for His Church but plans for accomplishing them. The challenge is that we do not think like God does. Christ promised He would build His church. His desire is to be actively involved in every aspect of church life. Christ is the Head and He wants to direct His church!

The challenge is when we use our thinking, it is no higher or better than the fallen world's way of thinking. As we seek what is on the mind and heart of God, He reveals His purposes and plans to us (Jeremiah 33:3). The Holy Spirit within each of God's people then guides us into the will of God. We begin to do God's will, God's way! He will show us how to do what He has purposed for us to do.

One of the marks of a church God uses is that in all things the people *pray first*. The Holy Spirit then works to move us from *people-centered* thinking to *God-oriented* thinking. We then have the opportunity to trust God to guide us into the right paths.

Prayer

Father, we acknowledge and confess our tendency to try to do Your work the world's way. Forgive us and cleanse us of our self-centeredness. We want to know Your plans so we can live and minister in ways that will bring Your blessings and produce abundant fruit. (John 15:7-8; 17:20-23; I Peter 4:7-11; Acts 4:29-31; Matthew 16:15-18; Proverbs 3:5-6)

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**Day 7 Christ’s Presence in His Church**  
 Rick Fisher

Read Revelation 2:2

*“I know your works...”*

To each of the seven churches the Risen Christ addressed in Revelation 2-3, He spoke these words, “I know your works”. To know their works, Christ had to be present in the midst of the church. Often, we find ourselves praying “be with us”, but is this biblical? We should pray, “make us aware of how very present You are”. When we gather in corporate worship, we do more than sing songs and hear a sermon. We encounter the transforming presence of the Risen Christ!

Through His presence, Christ pursues a personal love relationship with us, revealing His activity, His purposes and plans to us. He then invites us to join Him in what He is doing around us. His presence brings an accountability for what He purposes for us to do. He looks for obedience and in those places of disobedience, He looks of repentance.

Every believer and church are equipped with spiritual senses designed to help us be aware of the presence and activity of our Head. In His presence, there is no need to be anxious or fearful. Because of who He is, the Risen Christ gives us confidence to enter the future with expectation that our Leader will direct us in ways that produce much spiritual fruit and bring blessings to many. Any church, no matter the size or location, has complete access to the fullness of the presence of the Risen Christ and all that can mean for them!

Prayer

Father, we acknowledge that the Risen Christ is present in His church. He is in each of us as His followers and He is among all of us as a congregation. Make us fully aware of all that means and empower us to live in that awareness daily. May the presence of the Risen Christ transform all that we are and all that we do as a church! (I Corinthians 2:12-16; Hebrews 13:5; Ephesians 4:11-16; Psalm 16:11)





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Day 8 Christ's Power at Work in His Church  
Rick Fisher

Read Ephesians 1:22-23

*"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

Take a moment to read the entire text of Ephesians 1:15-23. This is a clear reminder of the power that is available to every church that acknowledges the Risen Christ as their Head. As I served for 30 years in the local church, most of that as a senior pastor, I discovered that the power of Christ was displayed in a variety of circumstances and decisions, both large and small. We may seek His power only when we have large decisions or challenging circumstances, but the Risen Christ is very present in the ordinary. Henry and Richard Blackaby state: "Often we long for spectacular displays of God's infinite power in our churches. But most often, God's power is experienced through the steady grind of ordinary living as we faithfully obey the last thing God told us to do."

Perhaps our greatest challenge is *faith*. We can know that we have access to all the power we need to accomplish anything (Matthew 19:26), but has that truth made its way to our hearts and affected the way we think, plan and behave? When we sense God is inviting us to join Him, do we measure our obedience by what we can do, what we have in terms of resources, or in light of who we have as our Head? Could it be that the Risen Christ, who is present among us and sees/knows us is waiting on us to move from trusting what we can do to abandoning ourselves to what only He can do?

When we focus ourselves and our church fully on who we serve as our leader, it becomes difficult to imagine there is anything too hard for Him!

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, we confess there have been times when we have trusted ourselves and our abilities and ways. We repent of our lack of trust in Your power. Remind us how powerful You are, and may that truth impact every decision we make. We trust You with the future and every aspect of our lives and this church. (Luke 1:37; Ephesians 1:15-23; Acts 1:8; II Peter 1:3; Colossians 1:28-29; Revelation 4:9-11)

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Day 9 Christ's Provision for His Church  
Rick Fisher

Read Philippians 4:19

*"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Do we really believe the truth found in this verse? Do live with a daily awareness of this truth, facing decisions with this truth guiding and shaping our lives? Recently, I spoke with a leader whose organization felt God was leading them to take a step of faith to expand their staff in order to engage a specific group of people but there was no financial provision available. Practically, the answer was "no". However, God had spoken clearly and when God speaks, the next thing we do reveals what we really believe about His power and provision. The leadership team decided to take this step of faith. Within the next 30 days, they received more than enough funds to secure the staff expansion well into the future.

Is there a reason for God to provide if we are not following His agenda? As Henry Blackaby has often stated: "God did not promise to supply our good intentions. He promised to provide for our obedience". His provision can come in a variety of ways: leaders, finances, circumstances and more, but there is nothing that is beyond the capacity of His provision!

My experience has been that when a congregation seeks the mind and heart of God, senses what is on His agenda and moves to make adjustments to they can obey, God releases His power and provision in ways that are beyond anything the church can imagine. The Risen Christ bases His plans for His church not on our resources, but on His ability to provide what is needed for our obedience.

Prayer

Father, forgive us for failing to trust You for the provision to accomplish what You purposed for us. Too often we have trusted in our abilities and resources. We commit to say "yes" to everything You place in our hearts to do for You, regardless of the circumstances or challenges. (Ephesians 3:20-21; Hebrews 13:20-21; I John 3:22; Revelation 3:8)

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Day 10 Christ's Future for His Church  
Rick Fisher

Read Jeremiah 29:11

*"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."*

The Risen Christ asked John to send messages to each of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3. With each message, Christ revealed that He was present in His church and that He knew priorities and works of each one. However, He also knew the solution for each church to have a vibrant and effective future. Regardless of the sin that had hindered them, Christ had a plan for a future filled with hope. We do not know the future. However, if we live in a love relationship with Christ, we have access to the One who does know, and He knows the plans He has for His people today and tomorrow. Just as with the churches in Revelation, much of the future Christ has for us requires us to make adjustments in order to see His provision and blessing.

I am aware of a church that was growing in number, but the leadership sensed they were not impacting their community in positive ways for the Kingdom. The leaders invited the congregation to enter an extended time of specific prayer over several weeks. Each week, they sought God's heart and mind, asking Him to reveal where He was at work in the community and where they should join Him. At the conclusion of the season of prayer, God had revealed three specific areas of His activity. The church moved quickly to adjust both priorities and resources. God honored their obedience by using this church to impact hundreds of lives in their community in years to come.

Let the Risen Christ set the agenda for your future. Obey Him with the confidence and understanding that He can provide all that is needed for you to accomplish whatever He leads you to do.

Prayer

Father, we know the Risen Christ has been appointed as Head of this church. He knows the future that would bring the Kingdom more fully to the people and area where you have planted our lives. We desire to glorify You by being obedient to what is revealed to us as we pray. (Luke 9:23-25; Psalm 32:8; I Corinthians 2:9-11; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 12:1-2; Romans 12:2; 15:13)