

CONSECRATE THE PEOPLE

Renewing Our
Covenant Commitments
to Jesus Christ

*Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.*

*Gather the people,
consecrate the assembly.*

Joel 2:15-16, NIV

CLAUDE V. KING

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Consecrate the People is an abbreviated process designed to help God's people prepare to renew their covenant commitments to Him. Several of the daily devotionals have been adapted from a more thorough process of preparing for and celebrating a sacred assembly at a Lord's Supper observance. *Come to the Lord's Table* by Claude King is a 28-day devotional guide that helps a church celebrate the Lord's Supper as a meaningful time of refreshment and renewal in its love relationship with Jesus Christ. Individual copies and case-lot quantities are available by calling toll free (800) 458-2772. Other resources that focus on revival and that would be especially helpful to leaders include *Fresh Encounter* by Henry and Richard Blackaby and Claude King and *Downpour* by James MacDonald. Visit www.lifeway.com for more details. For more information and preaching helps on Cry Out America, go to www.awakeningamerica.us/20-8-1/.

DAY 1

Call a Sacred Assembly¹

Probably, the reason you are reading this booklet is that a spiritual leader has asked you to prepare for a sacred assembly or a time to renew your covenant commitments to the Lord. *Sacred assembly* may be a new term for you, but the concept is ancient. In Scripture:

Sacred assemblies were occasions for God's people collectively to worship Him, to repent of personal and corporate sin, to remember His special blessings on them, and to anticipate future blessings. The prescribed sacred assemblies (or holy convocations) for Israel included the Sabbath (Lev. 23:3) and seven other days of sacred assembly: the first (Passover) and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:4-8), the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost, Lev. 23:15-21), the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25), the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32), and the first and eighth days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-36).

Sacred assemblies were times for God's people to confess and repent of their sins. They were times to renew the covenant relationship with the Lord and return to Him in faithful love and obedience. They were times for worship and sacrifice, feasting and fasting. Even with these regular opportunities to renew fellowship with God, His people tended to depart from Him and from obedience to His commands. Spiritual leaders knew that the sacred assembly was a time for corporate repentance in the face of God's righteous judgments.²

During the days of the prophet Joel, a great swarm of locusts brought devastation on the nation. This was a time to weep, mourn, wail, grieve, and despair. Joel asked, "Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors?" (Joel 1:2, HCSB). This was such a great catastrophe, future generations would talk about it with their children and grandchildren (see Joel 1:3). This time of great national disaster caused the prophet Joel to shout:

Declare a holy fast;
 call a sacred assembly.
 Summon the elders
 and all who live in the land

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To the house of the LORD your God,
and cry out to the LORD.
“Even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart.
Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.
Gather the people,
consecrate the assembly” (Joel 1:14; 2:12,15-16, NIV).

Desperate times called for desperate measures. In their distress the people were ready to cry out to the Lord for help. The prophet knew a sacred assembly was the appropriate time and way to turn to the Lord.

Many sense our nation is at a desperate time that calls for desperate measures. How many disasters have we experienced lately that have been some of the worst in history—the kind we will describe to our children and grandchildren? At times like this, God’s call to us is “Return to Me.” On the occasion of one sacred assembly during King Solomon’s reign, God made the following promise.

If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:13-14, HCSB).

The healing of our land is waiting on the repentance of God’s people. So is the healing of our marriages, families, churches, and cities. Sacred assemblies are appropriate times and ways for people, families, churches, cities, and nations to return to the Lord. Now is the right time for us to declare a holy fast, sound the alarm, and call a sacred assembly. Now is the time for us to return to a right relationship with God. Now is the time to renew our covenant commitments to Jesus Christ.

We dare not rush into the presence of a holy God unprepared. God commanded Joel to consecrate the people. I’ve prepared this booklet for you to prepare yourself for a time of sacred assembly.

🔥 Ask the Lord to help you prepare this week to enter His presence.

1. Pastors, see “Call to a Sacred Assembly” and other preaching strategies at www.awakeningamerica.us/20-8-1/preaching_strategies.html.

2. Claude King, *Come to the Lord’s Table* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2006), 4.

DAY 2

Prepare Yourself

- ☞ Have you experienced or observed a disaster or catastrophe that caused you to weep, mourn, wail, grieve, or despair—one so great that you will describe it to your children and grandchildren? Circle any you have experienced or observed up close or write another:

CRIME, DROUGHT, EARTHQUAKE, EPIDEMIC, FINANCIAL COLLAPSE, FLOOD, HAILSTORM, HURRICANE, OIL SPILL, PLAGUE, RIOTS, SHATTERED RELATIONSHIPS, TERRORIST ATTACK, TORNADO, TSUNAMI, VOLCANO, WAR, WILDFIRE

Crises are appropriate times to gather with God's people for sacred assemblies, just as they did in Joel's day. But actually, God wants us to celebrate sacred assemblies in such a way that we never stray far away from Him. These assemblies can be times of renewal, worship, festival, and rejoicing. Any time we gather to meet with God is a sacred assembly. If we do the ongoing spiritual work required by the Lord, we will not need an emergency sacred assembly as the people did in Joel's day.

God wanted the people to prepare themselves to meet with Him in Joel's day, so He commanded, "Consecrate the assembly" (Joel 2:16, NIV). We see a similar command in Exodus 19 when God explained to Moses that He was coming down on Mount Sinai to give the Ten Commandments: "The LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them'" (Exodus 19:10, NIV). Consecrating God's people is an important action for a spiritual leader to undertake when preparing them to meet with God or to renew their covenant relationship with Him.

In both Joel and Exodus, the Hebrew word for *consecrate* means *to make clean; to purify; to sanctify or to set apart from the common, profane, or unholy*.

- ☞ Read again the definition of *consecrate* above and write a brief definition in your own words.

Moses required the people to wash their clothes and abstain from sexual relations. Though being physically clean can be valuable, moral, mental, and spiritual cleansing is the more important preparatory task.

- ☞ Pause to think about the kind of cleansing you may need morally, mentally, and spiritually to be prepared to meet with God.

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Another concept expressed by the word *consecrate* comes from the combination of two different Hebrew words. Together they can mean *to fill the open hand*. Here's the idea. Imagine a priest standing beside the altar in the temple with his hands open to receive an offering from you. Once you place your offering into the priest's hands, it is consecrated to God. It is dedicated to Him for His purposes. It no longer belongs to you but to God. It is holy because God is holy.

As you think about your need to be consecrated, keep this idea of consecration in mind also. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, "Brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1, HCSB).

Imagine Jesus Christ seated on His throne with open hands to receive your life as an offering, a sacrifice, one that is holy and pleasing to Him.

☞ Which of the following words best describe the kind of life offering you want to bring to your Lord and King, Jesus Christ? Place a check beside those words.

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> arrogant | <input type="checkbox"/> clean | <input type="checkbox"/> evil | <input type="checkbox"/> holy | <input type="checkbox"/> humble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> immoral | <input type="checkbox"/> impure | <input type="checkbox"/> loving | <input type="checkbox"/> obedient | <input type="checkbox"/> pure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> selfish | <input type="checkbox"/> ungodly | <input type="checkbox"/> wicked | <input type="checkbox"/> surrendered | <input type="checkbox"/> faithful |

If you avoided words like *arrogant*, *immoral*, *impure*, *selfish*, *evil*, *ungodly*, and *wicked* and checked most of the others, you have the right desire for a consecrated life. This week I want to help you prepare your life to be an offering like that—one that will be pleasing to Christ.

☞ God desires a consecrated people. Will you agree to work through this consecration process this week so your life will be a pleasing offering to Him?

- Yes, I want my life to be pleasing and useful to the Lord.
- No, I have no interest in pleasing the Lord or giving myself to Him.
- Allow me to think about it. That's a serious decision, isn't it?

☞ Tell Christ about your desire and willingness to present your life to Him as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to Him. If you are hesitant, invite the Lord to reveal to you the benefits and importance of a consecrated life. Pray. Ask the Lord to help you prepare this week so you will be ready to assemble with other believers as a people who are holy and dedicated to the Lord.

DAY 3

Return to Your First Love

The resurrected and glorified Christ sent a message to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2. He commended their hard work, their endurance, their intolerance of evil, their stand against false teachers, and their patient endurance of hardships. But He had one thing against them: they had abandoned their first love for Him. What is the condition of your love for your Savior and Lord?

Jesus gave His disciples a guide by which to measure their love. He said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commands. The one who doesn’t love Me will not keep My words” (John 14:15,24, HCSB). Obedience to God’s commands is the best measure of your love for Him.

 **If God measured your love by that standard, what would He conclude about your first love for Christ? Check one.**

- a. I love Him, because I faithfully obey His commands.
- b. My love for Him isn’t what it needs to be, because I do not always obey His commands.
- c. I don’t love Him much, because I frequently fail to obey His commands.

I’m afraid most of us would have to check b or c, and we would receive the same message from Christ that Ephesus did: “You have abandoned the love you had at first” (Revelation 2:4, HCSB). If that is true of you, you can respond the way Christ commanded the Ephesians: remember, repent, and obey. Consecrate yourself by returning to your first love.

 **Take time to remember; then repent and obey. Write a journal entry for the following on separate paper and share it with others.**

- Recall your salvation. What did Jesus save you from? How much has He forgiven you? How is your life different because of Christ? What good things has the Lord done for you?
- Reflect on times when you have walked more closely with God. How have you experienced His love and nearness more deeply than you do now?
- Think about Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, on which He clearly demonstrated His love for you.
- Recall the ways and times you have walked in victory over sin and in obedience to Christ. Repent and do those things again. Return to your first love for Christ.

DAY 4

Remove the Idols in Your Heart

One way your love for Christ declines or grows cold is that you begin to love someone or something more than you should. His first and greatest command to you is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, HCSB). When anything distracts you from this first and wholehearted love for Christ, you need to return to your first love.

In Ezekiel 14 God said Israel’s elders had set up idols in their hearts. Idolatry is not just worshipping a false god or an image of one. When you allow your love to be drawn away to other things so your love for Christ decreases, you are practicing idolatry. This idol in your heart can be a person, a thing, or an activity. Today I want you to examine yourself to learn whether you have any heart idols you need to put away. Consecrate yourself by removing the idols and renewing your love for Christ.

 **Read the following Scriptures and underline the words or phrases that describe things you can love so much that they distract you from your first love for the Lord. I’ve underlined one for you.**

“Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15, HCSB). “No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money” (Matthew 6:24, HCSB).

 **Prayerfully read the following list of things that can become idols in your heart. Identify anything you have grown to love so much that it is distracting you from a wholehearted love for Christ.**

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> career | <input type="checkbox"/> money | <input type="checkbox"/> hobbies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> television | <input type="checkbox"/> power |
| <input type="checkbox"/> influence | <input type="checkbox"/> club or organization | <input type="checkbox"/> travel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> drugs/alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> gambling | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> another person | <input type="checkbox"/> the world and things of the world | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sports or sporting events | Other: _____ | |

 **Confess your idolatry to God. Grieve over the fact that you have offended the One who loves you so much that He died for you. Put away the false god and return to your first love for Jesus Christ.**

DAY 5

Humble Yourself and Put Away Pride

Quoting from Proverbs, Peter wrote, “ ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6, NIV). Pride is a sin that stands in opposition to God. He aggressively opposes it. Consecrate yourself and put away pride.

 **To get an idea of God’s thoughts about pride, read the Scriptures below and circle words like *pride*, *proud*, *arrogant*, and *haughty*.**

The LORD protects the loyal,
but fully repays the arrogant (Psalm 31:23, HCSB).

Though the LORD is exalted,
He takes note of the humble;
but He knows the haughty from a distance (Psalm 138:6, HCSB)

I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct,
and perverse speech (Proverbs 8:13, HCSB).

Everyone with a proud heart is detestable to the LORD;
be assured, he will not go unpunished (Proverbs 16:5, HCSB).

Pride comes before destruction,
and an arrogant spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18, HCSB).

I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant
and humiliate the insolence of tyrants (Isaiah 13:11, HCSB).

When pride is present in your life, it may manifest itself in a variety of other sinful ways. It is like the root of a tree that bears much fruit. If you cut off a branch to get rid of the fruit but do nothing to the root, you will soon get a new crop of fruit. Pride is like that. The following list includes some of the fruit sins that come from pride.

 **As you read the following list, look for evidence that you may have pride issues you need to deal with in your life.**

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prejudice | <input type="checkbox"/> argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> sexual immorality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rudeness | <input type="checkbox"/> boastfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> taking license to sin |

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- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> complaining | <input type="checkbox"/> stubbornness | <input type="checkbox"/> a critical spirit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disobedience | <input type="checkbox"/> independence | <input type="checkbox"/> selfish ambition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> exalting self | <input type="checkbox"/> prayerlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> a judgmental spirit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> faultfinding | <input type="checkbox"/> self-promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> rebellion toward authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gossiping | <input type="checkbox"/> self-sufficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> thinking highly of self |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unrepentant | <input type="checkbox"/> holding on to sin | <input type="checkbox"/> unwilling to confess sin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> haughtiness | <input type="checkbox"/> being demanding | <input type="checkbox"/> desiring control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> impatience | <input type="checkbox"/> being unforgiving | <input type="checkbox"/> pleasing people over God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ingratitude | <input type="checkbox"/> self-righteousness | <input type="checkbox"/> following your evil desires |

 **Do you see any evidence that you struggle with pride? Check one.**

- Yes No

If you checked no, that may be the best evidence of all. Pride is such a fundamental sin for all humans that we must always watch for evidence of it in our lives. Peter explained that the way to get rid of pride is by humbling ourselves. When God promised forgiveness and healing in 2 Chronicles 7:14, He gave four requirements to His people:

1. Humble yourself.
2. Pray.
3. Seek His face.
4. Turn from your evil ways.

The starting place is to humble yourself. Dealing seriously with your pride is a starting point for returning to a right relationship with God. In order to humble yourself, you can do such things as the following.

- Acknowledge God's greatness and sovereign right to rule your life.
- Agree with Christ that apart from Him you can do nothing.
- Agree with God about your sin. Confess your pride to others.
- Give up or yield your rights. Yield control to others.
- Submit to one another in reverence for Christ.
- Serve others. Accept lowly tasks without complaint.
- Confess your weaknesses or needs and accept help.
- Confess dependence on God and interdependence on others.
- Honor others above yourself.
- Do the things pride tells you not to do.
- Ask people to pray for you. Ask for help in getting rid of pride.
- Give away or dispose of things that cause you to feel proud.
- Be willing to associate with people of low degree.

 **Pray, asking the Lord to help you humble yourself and get rid of pride and every evidence of it in your life.**

DAY 6

Be Holy as God Is Holy

Peter wrote, “As the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’ ” (1 Peter 1:15-16, HCSB). That’s what consecration is all about: becoming holy, clean, pure, and righteous like God. Paul said, “Those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29, HCSB). God wants you to be holy as Christ is holy. Consecrate yourself by putting away everything that is unholy or even questionable.

 **Prayerfully read through the following list and ask God’s Holy Spirit to convict you of any unholy or questionable activities or attitudes that need to change. If He reveals something, agree with Him about your sin and repent (quit doing it; change your ways).**

- Put away lust and impurities of the mind.
- Put away all forms of sexual immorality.
- Put away lying, filthy language, slander, or hurtful words.
- Put away anger, rage, malice, prejudice, and racism.
- Put away sinful attitudes and behaviors that are not like Christ.

Some of these sinful patterns may seem impossible to put away. But Jesus Christ won victory over sin by His death and resurrection. You can ask God to help you live in the reality of Romans 6, which teaches that we have died to sin. We have been set free from sin and the power of sin. If you still frequently struggle with one or more sins, “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (James 5:16, HCSB). Ask a brother or sister in Christ to pray with you for victory over sin. Be holy as God is holy!

In Genesis 35 God invited Jacob to a time of worship. This would be a time of sacred assembly for Jacob’s family, so Jacob prepared them:

Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. We must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. ...” Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem (Genesis 35:2-5, HCSB).

If we are not very careful, we can be influenced by the standards of the people and culture around us just as Jacob’s family had been. We may

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tolerate or even embrace and endorse things that are impure, unholy, profane, unclean, or even wicked and evil. Over time our homes may be filled with such impurities. Take time to consecrate your home.

✎ **Bring your family together to consecrate your home. Stop and pray, asking God to reveal to you and your family members things in your home that represent the impurities of the world God would like for you to get rid of. Confess to the Lord that you want to be clean and pure before Him. Give Him permission to clean your home of impurities.**

✎ **Imagine Jesus is coming to your home to take a careful look in every room. He will see the things in your closets and drawers. He will see the music you listen to and the DVDs you watch. He will look on the shelves at your reading literature. He will check out the refrigerator and examine your computer files. Nothing will escape His pure gaze. Ask yourselves, *What is in our home that we would be ashamed for Jesus to see?* These are the things you need to throw away.**

✎ **Invite family members to clean the house of spiritual and moral impurities that may have accumulated there. With a trash can or bag in hand, walk through each room, cleaning as you go. In every case let God's Holy Spirit guide your consciences. If you have doubts or disagreement about an item, pause and pray about it and ask the Lord what He thinks about it.**

✎ **After you have collected the things that need to be disposed of, respond to God in prayer.**

- Confess to the Lord that you have sinned by tolerating evils and impurities that are not appropriate for His holy people.
- Ask Him to forgive and cleanse you.
- Ask Him to set you free from any desire to hold on to impurities. Ask Him to change your heart in love and obedience to Him.
- Pledge to Him your renewed loyalty, love, and desire to please Him and obey Him. Thank Him for the purity and godly character He is bringing into your life.

✎ **Dispose of the items that need to be thrown out. You may need to take them to a dumpster, burn them, or in some other way remove the temptation to retrieve them later. Do not sell or give away things that are evil, unholy, or impure.**

DAY 7

Restore Your Broken Relationships¹

The night before Jesus went to the cross, He prayed for our unity: “I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:23, HCSB). Our unity is the most convincing evidence to the lost world that Jesus is the Savior sent from God. And our disunity is probably the greatest hindrance in leading others to faith in Christ. If you have broken relationships with others, you must be reconciled. Consecrate yourself and reconcile your broken relationships.

 **On a separate sheet of paper, list the names of people with whom you have broken relationships. This would include those you have offended without seeking forgiveness and those who have offended you. Offenses can occur as a result of actions, words, or attitudes. Ask God to bring to mind all those you need to consider.**

Your relationship with others has a direct correlation to your relationship with God. Jesus said:

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

Your offerings and even your worship are unacceptable to God if you have caused offenses and have not reconciled. If you are the offender:

1. Pray and ask God for help in thorough repentance.
2. Go to make things right in obedience to God.
3. Confess your sin to God and to those directly affected by the sin.
4. Don't apologize. Ask for forgiveness.
5. Go in person if at all possible. Talk face-to-face.
6. Don't reflect negatively on the other person or his actions or attitudes. Deal only with your part of the offense.
7. Make restitution (pay for the offense) when appropriate.
8. If you don't receive a positive response, continue to pray for and seek reconciliation with the unforgiving person.

If you are the one who has been offended, Jesus has instructions for you also. He said, “Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against

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anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing” (Mark 11:25, HCSB). Holding on to unforgiveness limits the way God will forgive you and hinders your prayers. You need to understand and practice forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is fully releasing another from the debt of the offense.
2. Forgiveness is a command, not an option: “Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13, NIV).
3. You cannot forgive and love in your own strength. The Holy Spirit of Christ can enable you to forgive and love. Ask Him for help.
4. Forgiveness is a choice of your will, not the result of a feeling. You must choose to forgive.
5. The person who forgives is the one who has to pay the price of forgiveness. Jesus paid the price for you.
6. You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive and show grace and mercy. Being offended provides you with the invitation to reveal Christ to the offender by your forgiveness.
7. Forgiveness does not mean the offense was not wrong.
8. Forgiveness is not permission for the offender to do it again.
9. Forgiveness does not mean you will fully forget. You choose not to hold the offense against the person any longer. If the memories return and you start to hold on to the offense again, forgive again.
10. How much do you forgive? Seventy times seven (Matthew 18: 21–22). In other words, forgive an unlimited number of times.
11. Jesus said, “If [your brother] sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:4, HCSB). In other words, even if the offender really doesn’t repent and change his ways, you still forgive.
12. Even if the person doesn’t believe he is wrong, forgive. Jesus set the model for us on the cross when He prayed for those who were killing Him: “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34, HCSB).
13. In Mark 11:25 Jesus didn’t require you to go to the person to forgive. You can do that as you pray.

 **Apply these guidelines to the relationships you listed earlier. Ask God to guide and enable you to forgive and reconcile every broken relationship in a way that brings Him glory and brings you freedom and joy. Walk in unity.**

1. Adapted from Claude King, *Come to the Lord’s Table* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2006), 69–73. I’ve been greatly influenced in the matters of reconciliation and forgiveness by Life Action Ministries; P.O. Box 31; Buchanan, MI 49107-0031; www.lifeaction.org.

DAY 8

Renew Your Covenant with God

The writer of Hebrews explained that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant between God and His people. This covenant agreement is based on a love relationship. As our Lord and King, God has given us His commands to obey so we can experience life abundantly.

This is the covenant that I will make. ...
 I will put My laws into their minds
 and write them on their hearts.
 I will be their God,
 and they will be My people (Hebrews 8:10, HCSB).

But Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21, HCSB). We enter a saving covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by works of our own (see Ephesians 2:8-9). But our obedience to God’s will is one clear way we demonstrate that our love relationship with Him is genuine.

If you and your fellow church members have found that you have drifted away from your first love and from obedience to the Lord’s commands, God invites you to return to Him. Hear God’s invitation:

Let the wicked one abandon his way
 and the sinful one his thoughts;
 let him return to the LORD,
 so He may have compassion on him,
 and to our God, for He will freely forgive (Isaiah 55:7, HCSB).

Return to Me ... and I will return to you,
 says the LORD of Hosts (Zechariah 1:3, HCSB).

 **As I described in discussing consecration in day 2, Christ is seated on His throne with open hands waiting for the sacrifice of your life. Pray about the life of love, obedience, and holiness you will bring to Christ. Return to Him with all your heart!**

 **Read the Scriptures and statements on page 16. Be prepared to renew your covenant commitments to the Lord when you gather in sacred assembly with your brothers and sisters in Christ.**

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Reader 1: 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Colossians 3:1-14

People: Father, because You are holy, we have consecrated ourselves to be holy as You are holy. Through Christ we have put to death the things of our old sinful lives. We have put on the new self, and we ask You to continue to renew us and conform us to the image of Christ. We will seek to live lives that are spotless and blameless.

Reader 2: 1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8; Ezekiel 36:25-27

People: We love You, Lord Jesus Christ, because You first loved us and laid down Your life for us. We want to love You with all our hearts. We have put away the idols of our hearts. Forgive us and grant us renewed hearts of love for You.

Reader 3: 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:25,32-33

People: Sovereign Lord, today we choose to put away our love for the world and the things of the world. We will seek first Your Kingdom rule in our hearts and through our lives. We will pursue Your righteousness in our lives, in our families, and in our world.

Reader 4: Malachi 3:6-10; Matthew 23:23; Matthew 6:19-21

People: O Lord, we have been greedy and selfish. We have robbed You of things rightfully Yours. Forgive us and enable our repentance. Today we choose to give to You the things that are Yours, including money, justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Reader 5: Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:15,21,23-24

People: Because we love You, Lord, we choose this day to obey all You have commanded us. Deepen our love for You and enable our complete obedience.

Reader 6: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Acts 1:8

People: Christ Jesus, we are Your ambassadors, and You have entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. We surrender to Your calling to be Your witnesses and to plead with people to get right with You. We pledge ourselves today to be faithful to obey Your command to make disciples of all people to the ends of the earth.