**Three Kinds of Mourning: Prayer Themes for 10 Days**

***Personal (Repentance), Intercessory Mourning, and Longing for the Bridegroom***

1. **Personal Repentance: The Change must begin in your own heart**

Real repentance is a beautiful thing, leading us out of false and fleshly mindsets and into the “glorious liberty” that is ours in Christ.

**Understanding Personal Repentance:** Repentance is much more than confessing our sins to God, although that’s often the first step. Repentance in Greek means “changing our mind”. It’s when our minds and hearts stop agreeing with lies and come into agreement with God’s mind and heart. As we are “transformed by the renewing our minds” we grow up towards maturity, “the fullness of the stature that belongs to Christ.” (Rom. 12:2 and Eph 4:13)

**In Quietness and Trust:** In order to enter into Repentance, we don’t have to “beat ourselves up” over every perceived failing or enter into intense introspection. If we’ll simply stop and sit in stillness before the Lord and allow Him to be the focus of our mind and heart, he’ll begin to lead and we can just follow Him in simplicity. That’s real repentance. As Isaiah 30:15 says, “In repentance and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength.”

**Humility:** As we humble ourselves before God, we position ourselves to receive grace. As the Scripture says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” As this grace comes to us over an extended season (10 Days), we begin to experience spiritual renewal, like sap flowing back into the branches of a tree in the spring. This spiritual life, flowing from the heart of God, causes spiritual growth and maturity in each of us.

**Right Relationships:** One of the most important areas of repentance is related to broken relationships, especially those with others in the Body of Christ. Be sensitive to how the Lord may lead you during the 10 Days to reach out to and reconcile with other believers

**This really works!** It’s amazing to watch the work that God does in individual lives over these 10 Days, often beginning a work of personal transformation that is defining for that individual’s life, often leading to new callings and ministries as well. *Ultimately, personal transformation of individuals in the Body of Christ is the foundation on which everything else must be built. If we look like Jesus, we will see the changes we desire in the world!*

**Key Scriptures on Repentance, Humilty, and Personal Transformation**

* Matthew 5-7: How we think in the Kingdom
* Ephesians 1: Our Identity in Christ
* Ephesians 3:14-21: Our Trajectory in Christ
* John 13:34-35: How we should Love one Another
* James 3 and 4: Taming our Tongues, Wisdom from Above
* Proverbs 3: Learning Faith
* Romans 12: How we ought to live
* Exodus 20:1-17: The 10 Commandments

These Scriptures are just a starting point…open up your Bible and let God lead you!

1. **Intercessory Mourning: Agreeing and Aligning with God’s Promises**

**Daniel Chapter 9** is a great example of what I call **“intercessory mourning”.** Daniel is motivated to prayer and fasting by reading a statement of what God intends to in the Scriptures. He understands that God has declared that Jerusalem would be desolate for 70 years, realizes that 70 years has nearly passed, and begins to fast, pray, confess sin with mourning, and ask God to bring the captive nation back to Jerusalem.

**Passive or Active?** Daniel understood God’s purposes in His time. Rather than take a passive approach, Daniel engaged with the promises of God through fasting, prayer, and mourning. He understood that God looks for human beings to partner with him in his actions in human history. We would do well to ask ourselves, *What are some of God’s purposes in our time? What are Scriptures that He may bring to fulfillment in our lifetimes?*

**You Have a Role:** As in the story of Daniel, we have a role to play in the fulfillment of God’s promises, the role of an “Intercessor”. An intercessor is a go between, an advocate who represents one side’s interests to another. God has revealed to us His will so that we, as human beings, will ask Him to do what He has already revealed He will do. Likewise, we have an intercessory role with our fellow human beings, to communicate the desires of God’s heart to them.

**God’s Desire, Our Desire:** When the desires of God’s heart become the desires of our hearts, and the *status quo* of this evil age becomes impossible for us to tolerate. The discord between what God desires and what we see in the world creates a tension in us that causes our hearts to enter into mourning for the fulfillment of God’s purposes.

Our prayers are a part of God’s plan (Rev. 5:8, Luke 18) to fulfill His God’s purposes and promises in Scripture.

Here are four major promises of God that remain significantly unfulfilled. During 10 Days, we turn our attention to these things, lay hold of them by faith, and cry out to heaven for the fulfillment of all of God’s promises. Our God is still the God of Daniel!

**Four Major Biblical Promises: Intercessory Focus for 10 Days**

1. **The Gospel will go to every nation and ethnic group**

Matt. 24:14—“The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole earth, as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

* 1. For God to raise up and send missionaries to all nations/languages
  2. For God’s blessing on the declaration of the gospel especially to the unreached, the poor, and the oppressed
  3. For this scripture to be fulfilled “in our generation”

1. **There will be unprecedented , supernatural unity among followers of Jesus**

John 17:20-26—“let them be one as we are one…that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even just as you love me.”

* 1. Ask for John 17 Unity with faith that “Jesus gets what He asks for”
  2. Ask for the breaking down of historic enmities and barriers within the broader Christian community
  3. Pray for Purity, Fullness, Maturity, and Unity in the global Body of Christ

1. **There will be a global outpouring of the Holy Spirit**

Joel 2:28-30—“I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh…Before the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

* 1. That the outpouring of the Spirit that began on Pentecost would continue and be increased in our day.
  2. That God would release “the best wine, saved for last” (John 2)
  3. Acts 4:29-30: That God’s servants would be enabled to “speak your word with great boldness” and that God would stretch out his hand to “heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

1. **There will be Wide-Spread Salvation among the Jewish People**

Rom. 11:15: “For if their [Israel, the Jewish people] rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”

* 1. Romans 10:1 “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”
  2. Rom. 9:3 “I could wish that I myself were…cut off from Christ for the sake of…the people of Israel.”
  3. Rom. 11:12 “If their loss means riches for the Nations, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

**In Summary:** The Lord’s Prayer is a fitting summary of all these beautiful promises: “Your name be honored, Your Kingdom Come on earth as it is in heaven”

* 1. For Justice to be established on the earth and for the oppressed to be set-free
  2. For God’s name to be honored, revered, and loved by all people
  3. For Christ to return, which is the ultimate fulfillment of this prayer

1. **Mourning for the Return of Christ**

**Common Ground:** Regardless of our theological position, I’m sure that we can all agree on one thing—Jesus is coming back! As the Apostle’s Creed states: “He is coming again to judge the living and the dead”. So, we agree on the basic fact—He’s coming!

**We are to Ask for His Return:** I am also convinced we can agree to this: God the Father wants us to ask Him to send Jesus back. Why else do we pray every Sunday, “Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven?” While I want to see that happen *today* as much as the next person, we also need to understand that Jesus has taught us to *pray for His return*,when this prayer will be answered in fullness. The last prayer in the Bible is a prayer for the return of Jesus: “*Come, Lord Jesus*”, so we’re clearly on solid footing Biblically here.

**We are to Eagerly Desire His Return:** Praying for Christ’s return is *less about words* (Praying “Come Lord Jesus” over and over again) and more about *the posture of our hearts.* There is an “appropriate” level of longing, desire, and heart preparation for the return of Christ that each believer is invited to experience. I think that, by and large, believers are a long way away from this appropriate level of desire (from heaven’s perspective). Many of us are content with worldly pursuits, even thinking in our hearts “Lord, could you put that return off for a few years.” We need to repent of a wrong heart attitude towards Christ’s return and embrace a Biblical paradigm where every day is colored by an *eager desire* for the fullness of seeing Him face-to-face.

**Mourning for the Bridegroom:** Developing a heart of longing or *mourning* for the bridegroom is perhaps the most important aspect of the 10 Days (Matt. 9:15). The return of Christ is described as a wedding, where we as his Church are the bride. Can you imagine a bride who is just ho-hum about her upcoming marriage—“Darling, I love you, but…could we just put this off a few more years…or decades”?

Jesus is looking for the Church to desire Him and His return just as He desires us and longs to come to us. The desire of a bride and husband to be joined is our clearest Biblical image of this desire. I believe He’s looking for the desire of earth for His return to match the desire of heaven!

Once again, this is not about advancing a particular theological position. Of the major theological positions I am aware of, I can’t think of why anyone would be opposed to believers longing for and desiring Christ’s return! Far from being scripturally suspect, it’s a clear mandate.

**Key Scriptures:**

This quality of longing for Jesus’ return in His disciples is called by many different names, but the concept is similar. Here is a brief list of Scriptures that touch on this reality of *mourning* for the return of Christ.

* + 1. “Mourning” (Matt 9:15, Matt 5:4)
    2. “Groans and labors of child-birth” (Romans 8:23-24)
    3. “Eagerly waiting” (Rom. 8:25, 1 Cor. 1:7)
    4. “Watching and Praying” (Matt. 25:13, others)
    5. “Longing for and hastening the day” (2 Pet. 3:12)
    6. “Making ready/Preparing” (Rev. 19:7, Eph 5:27)