

SERIES: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER
Spiritual Growth Campaign
PART 1: ARE YOU WILLING TO GROW UP?

Welcome home. CVCHURH is a multi-cultural and intergenerational church. I am so excited to welcome you to our first Sunday where we're kicking off our 40 Days of Prayer spiritual growth campaign for this year. We have done quite a few 40 day campaigns, and I am most excited about this one because of the potential there is in seeing 2018: THE YEAR OF BREAKTHROUGH truly happen as we learn to pray and partner with God in seeing His Kingdom rule and reign advance in our own personal lives, our church life and our community and culture's life.

Why do we do these campaigns? Because most of the problems in our lives come from spiritual immaturity. We often times make decisions that are based on our feelings and not God's purpose as revealed in the Bible. Often times I will hear a person say, "Well, I am making this decision because I feel like it." Mature people make decisions based on truth, not simply based on feelings. So many of the problems in our world today, like our national debt and other things, happen because of immaturity. People often times don't know how to do what's wise and what is mature.

God's will for every one of us is to mature and grow up in experiencing His love and knowing His truth and how to live it out in the 7 most important areas of our lives, which are our Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Financial, Vocational, Intellectual, and Physical aspects of our lives. God wants you to be a strong, mature woman of God and a strong, mature man of God. Ephesians 4:14 in the Philips translation says, "**We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching. Instead we are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to GROW UP IN EVERY WAY INTO CHRIST.**" Paul argues you can get seduced into believing things that are not true when you're immature. Instead, the Bible tells us we're meant to hold firmly to the truth in love and grow up in every way into Christ. Please circle in your notes, "grow up in every way into Christ." Jesus Christ is the perfect and only picture in the universe of what true maturity looks like. Every spiritual campaign that we do is developed on the six pillars for spiritual growth. I want to look at the six reasons why we do these spiritual growth campaigns. There are laws of spiritual growth that you simply cannot violate if you want to grow in the stature of Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29 says, "**For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn**

among many brothers and sisters.” God’s ultimate goal is to make us, to make you, like Jesus Christ. There is a process that God uses to achieve His ultimate desire for you. God is the God of order, and He created the universe based on principles like those of physics. The physical laws, like gravity and the second law of thermodynamics, and other laws are what guide the universe so that it actually works like it does and sustains our lives. Just like these physical laws, there are spiritual laws that God has for you, and when you cooperate with them you will mature and you will learn how to live a life of breakthrough. **What is a breakthrough?** It is the act of overcoming or penetrating an obstacle or restriction in your life. Whether you know it or not, the enemy of your soul, satan, is constantly putting up obstacles, barriers and restrictions in order to block you from knowing who Jesus is and how much He loves you and to keep you in a state of immaturity. Let’s spend the rest of our time together this morning (afternoon) looking at the six pillars of spiritual growth.

I. We grow when we feed on God’s Word

Loved ones, the leading way you to get to know who Jesus is and why He came to earth and why He loves you and why He died on the cross for you and what God’s purposes has been all along about this planet and the future is by feeding, studying, digesting, meditating, and memorizing God’s Word, the Bible. We are learning more and more just how important it is to eat and drink the proper foods and liquids if you want to have maximum health in all of the systems of your body. You simply cannot be spiritually strong, healthy and sound without developing a great passion for God’s Word and taking the time to study and learn and put into practice God’s Word for your life. In Matthew 4:4 the devil comes to tempt Jesus and to try to seduce Him by getting Jesus to disobey His Father and rebel by using His power to preserve Himself. Listen to what Jesus said to the devil. **“But Jesus told him, ‘No! The Scriptures say, “People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’”** Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. **God’s Word is more important than our food, drink or any material blessings.** In a matter of fact the point Moses was making in Deuteronomy 8 was that God provided for Israel like He did because they were honoring and obeying His Word. In Acts 20:28 & 32 Paul tells the spiritual leaders in the church at Ephesus the two most important things he could about their ability to lead the people they serve so they would all continue to grow and mature in their faith in Jesus Christ. **“So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—His church, purchased with His own blood over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. 32 And now I entrust you to God and the message (Word) of His grace that is able to build you up and give you an**

inheritance with all those He has set apart for Himself.” When you take the time to study, meditate, memorize, understand and act on God’s Word, you are protecting and guarding yourself from the lies of the devil and those who speak lies concerning God and His Word. God’s Word is able to build you up and strengthening you and give you the eternal inheritance that God has given to you in Jesus Christ. You will only grow strong in your faith to the degree that you’re reading God’s Word and understanding it and applying it to every area of your life. Psalm 119:9, **“How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word.”** Psalm 119:11, **“I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”** Psalm 119:29, **“Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.”**

Action Step: A daily time in God’s Word for 40 days using the SOAP skill

II. We grow when we learn in different ways

We grow best when we learn in different ways. We’re all unique. There is no other person just like you. You have a unique voice print, unique eye print, thumb print, fingerprint, hand print, and unique foot print. You have a unique heartbeat, and you have a unique learning style. If you’re going to grow, you must learn other learning styles, and you have to know what your learning style is. In Luke 3:18 in the CEV translation says, **“In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people.”** Some of us are auditory learners. This is why you like listening to speakers, listen to cd’s and you love to talk on the phone. There are others of us that would rather read or watch to learn. You’re what we call a visual learner. Show it to me. Don’t tell me, but show me. I can watch a video or read a book and then accomplish the task. Some of us are oral learners. By that I mean we learn by talking. You learn by talking and listening to others. Oral learners love small groups. Why? Because you get to talk and learn. There are some of us our brains don’t engage until they start talking. There are some of us who are kinesthetic learners. That means you learn best by getting your hands involved. We call it hands-on learning.

During our 40 day focus on prayer we will use this strategy. You will hear me teach seven teachings on prayer. In your small groups you will watch seven different videos together so you will see and hear and take notes. You will get to learn orally by engaging in a small group where you will get to talk and listen. You will read your Bible daily in devotions. You will get to do some projects with your small group. If all you do is come to church and listen to me for seven weeks, you will only get the auditory aspect of what God wants to teach you. The majority of the other learning styles happen in small group. This is why I am

so desirous of each one of you getting into a small group. In this campaign we will use all four learning styles of hearing it, reading it, studying it, memorizing it, mediating on it, and doing it in a small group. You will engage your eye gate, ear gate and mouth gate.

III. We grow when we develop spiritual habits

One of the keys to spiritual growth as well as growth in the key seven areas of your life is understanding the power of your daily habits. You're either growing in your freedom, joy and peace, or you are stuck in feeling negative and not moving forward. One of the keys is what the daily habits you are involved in are. If you build good habits you will have good character and that will lead to a great destiny. Your habits determine what you are, and what you are determines where you go in life. Your character is the sum total of your habits. If a person says, "I have integrity, because I'm honest," but you're only honest 25% of the time, you don't have integrity. Integrity means you're habitually honest. You are habitually doing the right thing. If a man or a wife says to their spouse, "Honey I'll be faithful to you 28 days of the month," guess what—partial faithfulness is unfaithfulness. Partial obedience is disobedience. I can't say I'm a faithful husband if I'm faithful most of the time. No. it has to become a habit in your life. If you have gone through our LD 101 seminar, and you have taken out membership here at CVCHURCH, your next step is to attend our LD 201 seminar, which is entitled HOW TO GET TO KNOW JESUS BETTER. It is our base for spiritual maturity. In this seminar you will learn four of the most important habits to develop the kind of mature and intimate relationship with Jesus He desires with you and for you. The foundational principle to developing strong habits is you identify the habits you want and then you develop them by repetition and by practice. Jesus, after washing His disciples' feet—which was the job of the servants of each household, He asked His disciples if they understood what He was doing. Jesus says, "You call Me Lord and teacher and that is who I am. Since I am your Lord and teacher, and I have washed your feet, you ought to wash each others' feet. I have done this to give you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you." Then in John 13:17, He finishes this powerful lesson of loving each other by serving each other by saying to them, "**Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.**" That is how you build strong spiritual habits. Do them over and over and over, and you do them because you love Jesus and you want to become like Him. Luke 5:16 says, "**But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.**" Hebrews 5:6 says, "**While Jesus was here on earth, He offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the One who could rescue Him from death. And God heard His prayers because of His deep**

reverence for God.” We will work together on four habits over the next 40 days to get them embedded in our hearts and minds. I am memorizing Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible. This week one of the verses put to memory is 119:34, **“Give me understanding and I will obey Your instructions. I will put them into practice with all of my heart.”** Here are the four habits I want to lead you in for the next 40 days:

1) Group worship on Sundays

Come all seven Sundays and come on time to worship together.

2) Small group fellowship

Sign up today to get in a small group. You can also sign up today to host a small group.

3) Daily time alone with God (Bible and prayer)

4) Memorizing God’s Word

Please hear me, loved ones. This is the foundation for learning how to live a life of Breakthrough. I am asking you to commit to these four basic habits with me from now till Easter. If you do, you will be successful this year in experiencing the breakthroughs you so desperately need and desire.

IV. We grow when we help each other grow

We grow spiritually when we commit to love, serve and help each other. Friends, you cannot grow to spiritual maturity by yourself. It will never happen. You need me, and I need you, and we all need each other. God wired us so that we cannot grow to maturity by ourselves. Hear me, loved ones. Spiritual maturity is relational in nature. Romans 1:12 says, **“When we get together, I want o encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.”** Spiritual growth and encouragement happen in relationship to others. You learn to become more sensitive to give preference to others when you spend time with them in your small group. The reason being in a small group is so important is that the #1 lesson God wants each one of us to learn is how to love. You can’t learn to love others by staying in your cave. The very reason you don’t want to be in a small group is the very reason you need to be in a small group. “Hey Scott, there might some people who disagree with me. There might be some people who are irritating and aggravating.” Yes, there will be. If you find someone irritating, that is God say you must look at yourself to figure out the reason you’re reacting like you do. Some of the most difficult people to deal

with are those who have unresolved hurts, and they overreact. God will put these people in your life to teach you to love them and to respond to them in a way that they might just listen to you and make some significant changes that will benefit them, but it will benefit everyone else around them. Hebrews 10:24-25, **“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.”**

Action Step: Join a small group

Here is my challenge to you, loved friends. I need 30 of you to be willing to host a small group. **HOST means to have a heart for people. Open your home. Serve a snack. Turn on the DVD.** Anyone can do this unless you're a sociopath, then I recommend you don't do it. I want every one of you who call CVCHURCH your home church, whether you're an attender or a member, please sign up today to get into a group. You will never mature spiritually without committing to be there for others, and the easiest way to do that is to get into a small group. Let's do this together, church. Roberta Rea is phenomenal. She is the one who is helping us get people into small groups, and she is showing those of you who will host a group how to do it.

V. We grow when we expect to grow

This is called the faith factor, friends. In Matthew 9:29, two blind men relentlessly followed Jesus asking Him to heal them. **“Then He touched their eyes and said, ‘Because of your faith, it will happen.’”** Here is a leading key in receiving and participating in all of the breakthroughs that God was to give to all of us—it is this: God will bless your life according to your faith and the actions that you take. Whatever you're willing to believe Him for and you take the corresponding actions, God will bless your faith. This is what happened for these two blind men. The text says they believed Jesus could heal them, and He did. According to your faith God will do what you ask Him to. With this being true I ask every one of you to go home this afternoon and write out your goals and your prayer requests stating what you're believing God to do in your life over the next 40 days. “Jesus, I must get stronger in this area. I must have a breakthrough in myself in these areas.” When you study Scripture, God isn't moved by your moaning, blaming, murmuring and complaining, but He is moved by your faith and trust in Him. Capitalize on these 40 days in this new year of 2018: THE YEAR OF BREAKTHROUGH. Write out what you want God to accomplish in and through you. “God, I'm expecting you to do this. I'm expecting

you to work in my life. I'm expecting a miracle. I'm expecting a breakthrough. I'm expecting an answer."

VI. We grow when we commit to grow

You will only grow in the seven areas we talk about consistently here at CVCHURCH and in the five purposes of **LOVING GOD (Worship)**, **SERVING GOD (Ministry)**, **SHARING GOD (Evangelism)**, **KNOWING GOD (Fellowship)**, and **GROWING IN GOD (Discipleship)** when you choose to grow and mature. Spiritual growth is a choice. Question: A year from today, do you intend on being at the same level you are right now? Do you intend to be stronger or still suck in the same problems you're in right now? Will you be more mature, or will you be where you are right now? It's your choice. In Jeremiah 29:13 God says this to us, **"If you look for Me wholeheartedly, you will find Me."**

Action Step: You covenant with others

As I close, here is the bottom line, friends, "What choices are you are going to make for the next 6 weeks. Do nothing? Miss out and watch everyone else grow up and let God use them for His purposes? Are you willing to step up to the plate and to develop some new habits, which will determine the rest of your life and even lead to rewards in your eternal destiny? I want to lead you in prayer as we close. Father, as I look out on these dear people I am filled with such deep love for them. They are wonderful people. We've been through a lot of ups and downs, highs and lows, crushing grief and soaring joy. We have experienced a lot together in life. I do believe that our best days are ahead of us. Jesus, I commit to moving myself first and influencing everyone else to deeper levels of maturity and growth. We don't want to waste our lives. We don't want to miss out on what You've got in store for us. We want all of the blessings You have for us in this year of breakthrough, and we're willing to commit to the habits that it will take. I pray a special blessing on every person here that, as we go into the next 40 days, we will go into it with anticipation and expectation. We refuse to waste our time by not demonstrating faith during these 40 days. Thank You in advance for what You're going to do in my life and the lives of everyone here who chooses to engage. We know that spiritual growth is a choice, and we pray that as we build these habits into our lives, we will become true women and men of God in a world that is filled with unstable, flaky, uncommitted people. I pray this blessing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.