

## Antioch Waco — Consecration Week

### Consecration Resources & Practices

Consecration — to dedicate to the service of God

Happy New Year! As a church, we want to set aside time to reflect on the past year, give thanks to God for His mercy and blessings and look forward to 2024 by dedicating ourselves to loving and obeying Him afresh. Think of this as “finding north” and reorienting the ship of our lives toward God and His purposes.

The goals of this hour of consecration are to:

- Leave behind anything that might hold us back from God and His purposes
- Practice gratitude
- Prayerfully dedicate 2024 to the Lord

Below you will find several practices to help you accomplish these goals. This can be done quietly on your own or with one or two others. We just ask that you respect others' ability to prayerfully focus during this time.

### Worship

Take 5-10 minutes to meditate on (slowly and prayerfully considering) the following passages. Give thanks to God for who He is.

- God the Father
  - Psalm 103:13 — As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
  - 1 John 3:1 — See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
  - James 1:17 — Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.
- God the Son
  - John 14:6 — Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
  - John 1:1 — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
  - Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
  - Isaiah 53:5 — But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.
- God the Holy Spirit
  - Romans 8:26 — Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.
  - Galatians 5:22, 23 — But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
  - John 14:15-17 — If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom

## Antioch Waco — Consecration Week

the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

- 2 Corinthians 3:17 — Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

### Journaling/Discussion Prompts

#### *Ashes to Beauty*

Life can be difficult. As you look back on 2023, it might be colored by emotions like pain, grief and disappointment. Before we dive fully into 2024, take some time to process the highs (breakthroughs, achievements, joys, new beginnings, etc.) and lows (loss, sickness, financial difficulties, broken relationships, failures, etc.) of the past year.

One of the many great things about God is that He's big enough to absorb our pain. AND He's in the business of transforming our pain into something beautiful over time. Isaiah 61:3 indicates that Jesus, by His Spirit, was sent to "comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified."

Exercise:

Draw a line across the middle of a sheet of paper. Above the line, write the positive things (the highs) about this past year. Below the line, write the difficult things (the lows) about this past year. Here's how this could look with examples spanning various life stages:



## Antioch Waco — Consecration Week

Afterward:

- **Thank** God for the blessings (and even the difficulties ... insofar as God will use them to reveal His love for us, His broader nature and to bring about breakthroughs in our lives)
- **Lament** the difficulties of the past year. This could happen in four movements (Read Psalm 13, 22 and 88 for examples):
  1. Turn to God
  2. Cry out your complaint
  3. Appeal for God to hear and respond
  4. Confess your trust in Him regardless of the outcome
- Exchange anything you're holding onto too tightly that is preventing you from moving forward
  - Ask, "Father, what do I need to let go of?" Write down what comes to mind. Reflect and evaluate what might be holding you back from moving forward in God.
  - Ask, "Father, what do you want to give me in return?" Write down what comes to mind. (Hint: If it's not biblical, it's not of God.)

### *Thankfulness*

We enter God's Kingdom with thanksgiving and His courts with praise (Psalm 100:4). Gratitude is not just an emotion. It is equally an act of the will. Even if you don't *feel* thankful, exercise your will by choosing to be grateful.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 — Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks *in all circumstances*; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- Spend 5-10 minutes writing out what you are thankful for.

### *Setting Jesus Before Us and Limiting Distraction*

We are likely the most distracted generation in history. To abide in Jesus means to give Him our attention; to be present to Him. What steps can you take to limit distraction and "set the Lord always before you?"

- Psalm 16:8 — I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- What distracts you from setting your focus and attention on Jesus?
- What one to two practical steps can you take in these early days of 2024 to minimize distraction and to set the Lord before you?

### *5 Minutes of Silence*

We rarely spend time in total stillness. Imagine sitting with a friend who is constantly checking their phone and looking over your shoulder to see who else is in the room. They are not being present to you. We are like that with God much of the time. May we all grow in focusing our hearts and minds on Him!

- Psalm 46:10 — Be still, and know that I am God ...
- Take four deep breaths.
- Eliminate distractions from your mind.
- Picture God in some manner — on His throne, Jesus kneeling to bless children, on the cross, etc.
- Be present to God. The goal is awareness of His presence with you.

## Antioch Waco — Consecration Week

### Communion

#### *Confession*

Examine your heart. Ask the Lord to bring to mind any unconfessed sin (Psalm 139:23, 24). Confess (meaning acknowledge that it was evil) to God and to someone else as is needed.

- 1 John 1:9 — If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- James 5:16 — Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

#### *Taking the Elements*

Communion is an ancient sacrament where we remember the sacrifice of Jesus and boldly declare that He will return in bodily form. Read the following Scripture, and then take the elements together (if you are with others) to remember His death and proclaim His imminent return.

- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 — For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- Pray a prayer of thankfulness.
- Take the elements.

### Consecration

#### *Dedicating our Lives To Love and Serve the Lord*

It is right to set the orientation of our will to follow Jesus every day. Let this be a holy moment of consecrating our lives again to follow Jesus, come what may, in 2024.

- Deuteronomy 30:15 — See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.
- Joshua 24:15 — And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.
- Pray a prayer of dedication to love and serve Jesus in 2024.

#### *Letting Go of Self-Striving, Trusting in Self*

Our church body is being called of the Lord all over again to repent of our self-striving and to trust in God's power and leadership. The metaphor is of someone throwing down their oars (self-strength) and instead raising the sails to catch the wind (dependence on the Holy Spirit).

- Zechariah 4:6b — Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.
- Proverbs 3:5, 6 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
- Pray prayers of repentance for self-reliance and self-striving and ask for grace to depend on the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit in 2024.

## Antioch Waco — Consecration Week

### Bonus

#### *Additional Scriptures for Prayerful Meditation*

- Spend some time meditating on the following passages. For the pictorial passages, activate your imagination and paint the scene in your mind. Insert yourself in the story. For all the passages, slowly and prayerfully consider the text.
- Genesis 1; Exodus 14:10-31; 1 Kings 18:17-39; 2 Chronicles 6:40-7:4; Job 38; Psalm 18:1-19; Psalm 103; Psalm 147; Isaiah 53; Ezekiel 1; Daniel 3:11-30; Hosea 2; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Matthew 27:27-54; Luke 7:1-16; Luke 15; John 1:1-18; John 10:1-18; Romans 5:1-11; Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 4; Ephesians 1:1-14; Colossians 1:13-20; Hebrews 1:1-3, 5:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Revelation 1:10-18; Revelation 4; Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 19:1-16; Revelation 21:1-4, 9-12, 22-27; Revelation 22:1-7

#### *Breath prayers*

- Spend three to five minutes praying a simple phrase over and over — half of the phrase as you breathe out, and the other half as you breathe in.
- Examples:
  - The Lord is my Shepherd // I shall not want
  - Lord, Jesus Christ // have mercy on me
  - Abba // I belong to you
  - You are the Potter // I am the clay
  - You satisfy me with good things // and I am renewed
  - My flesh may fail // but You are my strength forever
  - Lord shine your face on me // and give me peace
  - When I am afraid // I put my trust in You