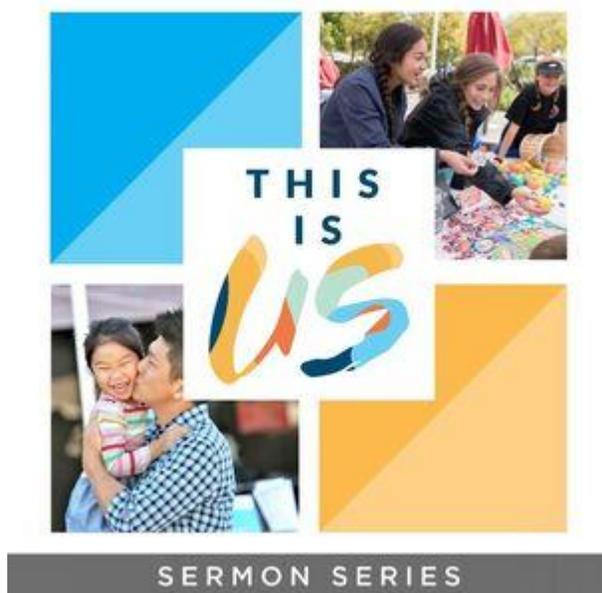


## ***THIS IS US***

Part 5: D.O.O.R.S –  
OUR 2021 VISION FOR OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

Written by Pastor Steve Norman  
February 1 – 7, 2021

Words of Encouragement Days 166-170



At different times in our lives, it is good to pause, stop what we are doing, and ask the question 'why'. Why am I doing this? What am I doing? Why am I doing it? The answer to the question 'why' always determines 'how' and 'how long'.

**THIS IS US**, the first series of the brand-new year, will help us pause and ask what is 'church' and why do we do it?

Join us as we investigate 'church' and remind ourselves what church is really all about.

### **This Week's Memory Verse:**

**"Never be lazy, but work hard and  
serve the Lord enthusiastically.  
Rejoice in our confident hope.  
Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.  
Romans 12:11-12**

## MEETING WITH GOD – Day 166

[For the next 21 days, the focus of our devotionals will be to enable you to take a pause from your busy schedule and routine to reconnect with God through prayer. As you read through this plan, may this spiritual journey strengthen and fill you with God's presence, and renew, refresh, and restore you in the purpose God has for your life.]

***"So Solomon finished the Temple of the Lord, as well as the Royal palace. He completed everything he had planned to do in the construction of the Temple and the palace. Then one night the Lord appeared to Solomon and said, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices. At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or command grasshoppers to devour your crops, or send plagues among you. Then if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land." 2 Chronicles 7:12-14***

### RENEWED STRENGTH: SPIRIT OF PRAYER

**IN** today's passage, we meet King Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7 after one of his historic accomplishments of building the Temple. Solomon had just finished dedicating the Temple to the Lord. As soon as he finished praying, we see in the first part of chapter 7 that the Spirit of the Lord filled the temple.

"When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple. The priests could not enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and

praised the Lord, saying, 'He is good! His faithful love endures forever!'" 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

Later in the chapter, in 2 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord appeared to Solomon and told him that He had heard his prayer and that the people should humble themselves to diligently seek the Lord in prayer and repent from their wicked ways. Then the Lord would bring forgiveness and healing into the land.

This scenario applies to our lives as we set on this journey to pray and seek God's face for the next 21 days. Just as God called to His people during Solomon's day, we are also called to humble ourselves and make room for the Holy Spirit to fill the temple of our hearts and souls during these days of prayer. May the Lord, through His Holy Spirit, help us to identify the things in our lives for which we need repentance and healing. As you make room in your life for God to move, you will see that the Lord will increase the spirit of prayer in your life. When the church and His people join together in prayer, God will bring healing to our nation. May our awesome God renew, rebuild, and restore your life as you embark on this exciting journey of prayer.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, Thank You for Your Word. I pray that Your Holy Spirit and Your glory will fill my heart as I set about to pray during these next 21 days. Help me to be open to hear from You and to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's voice in my life. Lead me and guide me as I am renewed, rebuilt, and restored through my time with You in prayer. I humbly ask this in Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

**Love the way Jesus loves!**

**Pastor Steve**

## MEETING WITH GOD – Day 167

[For 21 days, our focus is to enable you to take a pause from your busy schedule and routines to reconnect with God through prayer. As you read today, may this spiritual journey strengthen and fill you with God's presence, and renew, refresh, and restore you in the purpose God has for your life.]

***“Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” Ephesians 4:21-24***

### RENEWED STRENGTH: RENEW YOUR MIND

**THE** Apostle Paul wrote to the early church of Ephesus about being renewed in the spirit of your mind. **What does it mean to renew the spirit of your mind?** Ephesians 4:21-24 tells us that renewal is putting off former conduct (that is our sinful life) and putting on a new man, one which is growing in true righteousness and holiness (likeness of God). Renewal is the process of transformation or sanctification that takes place in our spirit from our old nature to a new life in Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 confirms that if we are in Christ, we are a new creation and made new. Our sinful acts are not in line with God's nature, so we need to renew our mind to continue to put on the new life.

In the beginning of creation, mankind was made in God's likeness. However, shortly after being created Adam and Eve sinned, and mankind's relationship with God changed forever. Our natural self, our old man, is sinful by nature, but the good news found in Ephesians 4 and other passages is that as the Holy Spirit renews our mind, our mind, soul, and body will be transformed into God's

likeness, and this will help us to have a stronger relationship with God.

In II Corinthians 4:16, we learn that we need to experience this renewal on a daily basis. When we wait in the presence of God and meditate on His word, the Holy Spirit will come into our hearts and will teach us the way of truth and help us to be renewed. The great late evangelist Dr. Billy Graham said, “Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion – it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ.” We all need spiritual renewal daily to prevent us from going our own way. Spending time in God's word and repenting from sin will enable us to renew our covenant and relationship with God. God loves you and He has chosen you as His child because He wants to come and dwell with you each day. Take time today and every day this week to be renewed and see the difference it will make!

### TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, It's easy for my mind to become cluttered with things that go contrary to Your word and instruction for living. After all, social media, the internet, television, movies, magazines, books, billboard, advertisements, and just about every other type of media practically shout for my attention. So today, I submit myself to be renewed every day by reading Your word and talking to You. Forgive my sin, make right any regrets I have due to past mistakes I've made, and come into my heart to dwell with me. Thank You for transforming my thoughts and attitudes to be more in line with Your desires for me. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

**Love the way Jesus loves!**

**Pastor Steve**

## MEETING WITH GOD – Day 168

[For 21 days, our focus is to enable you to take a pause from your busy schedule and routines to reconnect with God through prayer. As you read today, may this spiritual journey strengthen and fill you with God's presence, and renew, refresh, and restore you in the purpose God has for your life.]

***"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You." Psalm 51:10-13***

### **RENEWED STRENGTH: RENEW A STEADFAST SPIRIT**

**IN** the 17th century, a young man named John Newton lived in England. Although he was taught about Christian discipline in his early childhood by his mother, he became a rebellious young man following the death of his mother. He learned sailing skills from his father, although his stubborn nature led to him being punished. In time, John Newton served as a ship's captain, where he steered against an enormous storm and consequently experienced the mercy of God who saved his life and the ship. Later, he realized how the grace of God led his life. He became a preacher in England and, with a renewed spirit, wrote the popular hymn - "Amazing Grace." This hymn is used today in many churches and the U.S military.

When we read II Samuel 11, we see that King David craftily killed Uriah who was a faithful soldier in David's army and, by misusing his power, took Uriah's wife for his own. David's actions displeased God, who sent Nathan the prophet to express God's thoughts to David. Upon

hearing the Lord through Nathan, David recognized he had sinned against the Lord (2 Samuel 12:13). David felt that

the presence of God had left him so he begged for God's mercy. He repented deeply for his sin and cried, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me". David's predecessor, King Saul, also disobeyed God. The Prophet Samuel was sent by God to talk to Him about his disobedience. Saul recognized his disobedience (1 Samuel 15:22-24), however, in the latter part of his life, he did not allow God to renew his heart and did not have the realization of God's mercy.

In Psalm 51, we see how deeply King David repented for his sin and asked God to change his heart because he knew that God would not reject a broken and contrite heart. David could not step forward in his spiritual relationship with God without fixing the sin in his life. As children of God, we, too, need to examine our spiritual life to check where we have disobeyed God and displeased Him. Our compassionate Lord is ready to listen to the prayers that come from an honest heart and He will surely renew such a heart. Take some time today to examine your heart, confess your sin, and ask God to renew your heart in Him.

### **TODAY'S PRAYER**

Lord, I confess my sin before You and ask You to forgive me. Help me to have a heart that is open to listen to You when Your Holy Spirit convicts me of my sin and the need to repent. Give me a repentant heart like David and renew Your Spirit within me. Then, may I strive daily to walk with You with a steadfast spirit that seeks to please You in all that I say and do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Love the way Jesus loves!**

**Pastor Steve**

## MEETING WITH GOD – Day 169

[For 21 days, our focus is to enable you to take a pause from your busy schedule and routines to reconnect with God through prayer. As you read today, may this spiritual journey strengthen and fill you with God's presence, and renew, refresh, and restore you in the purpose God has for your life.]

***"Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."***  
***Isaiah 40:28-31***

### **RENEWED STRENGTH: STRENGTH THAT COMES FROM TRUSTING**

**THE** word trust means “firm belief in the reliability or in the ability of someone or something.” As humans, our confidence in everything we do is drawn from the source of trust. Beginning in childhood, we are confident that we will be fed every day because we trust that our parents would do anything to provide for us. We trust their love and ability. As we grow, we continue to develop trust that teachers will teach us what is right, people of authority will act to protect us, and employers will keep their part of the employment contract they have made with us.

Very often in our spiritual life, trust can be a dilemma. We tend to trust people whom we see and at times feel confident in our own ability. However, trust in our own ability will not take us very far because we are limited in that ability, and when something more than our ability challenges us, we tend to feel fear, confusion, and disappointment. The Bible tells us that faith, believing in things hoped for and evidence of

things not yet seen, in God is what is needed to please God (Hebrews 11:1; 6), but faith in our unseen God can be difficult when faced with a challenge that looks daunting.

This where the good news comes into play. In Isaiah 40:30, we read that those who put their trust in the Lord will renew their strength and soar on wings like eagles. When we put our trust in the Lord, we are not working in our own ability or strength but in the ability and strength of God. Isaiah 40:31 also tells us that “they will run and will not grow weary, they will walk they will not faint”. Strength that comes from the Lord will keep us going and fills us with peace, vacates anxiety, and gives us confidence. It removes fear and makes us bold. It heals our failures and fills us with grace. It wipes away our past and gives us new hope and a great future.

During these days of prayer, take a moment to think about where you have placed your trust. If it is not already placed in our Almighty God, make a decision today to trust God's ability in everything and let Him renew your strength.

### **TODAY'S PRAYER**

Lord, I come before You today with a decision to trust You and You alone in everything. In my weakness, Your grace is sufficient. (II Corinthians 12:9) Through You, I can do anything. (Philippians 4:13) Thank You for Your promise that You will give me new strength when I am tired and weary from the cares of this world. (Isaiah 40:30-31) Help me to set my eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), in whom I am made righteous (Hebrews 10:4), perfect (Hebrews 10:14), and a conqueror (Romans 8:37), and help me to run my race of life with the strength that comes from You. (Hebrews 12:1) In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Love the way Jesus loves!**

**Pastor Steve**

## MEETING WITH GOD – Day 170

[For 21 days, our focus is to enable you to take a pause from your busy schedule and routines to reconnect with God through prayer. As you read today, may this spiritual journey strengthen and fill you with God's presence, and renew, refresh, and restore you in the purpose God has for your life.]

***“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. . . ‘I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love Me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to Me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.’” Rev. 2:1-5***

### RENEWED STRENGTH: REMEMBER YOUR FIRST LOVE

**AS** a new Christian, you may have experienced a “first love” with God, a time often expressed through a fervent hunger for God’s Word, His "love letter" to us. You may have spent hours praying and meditating upon His Word, and even read books to learn more about this new-found relationship with Him. As years go by, however, the busy life of this world might have begun to zap your energies and pull you away from your time spent in His Word, and you may have felt that first love wane. If this happens, the Bible describes this by saying we have lost our first love for God.

In Revelation Chapter 2, we see that the Church of Ephesus had started with great enthusiasm and love for the truth. Battles of this world and spiritual negligence, however, caused them to lose their enthusiasm for God. This condition is also true today in many lives and churches. Many who started their Christian walk with God and the launch of new churches did so with great enthusiasm and evangelistic vision. Somewhere down the line, they have lost their hunger and zeal for the Lord that they had in

their early days. If you find yourself waning in your "first love" with our Lord, let these days of prayer re-ignite and renew your fire for God. Take some time to think and remember your first-love experience with God. Then acknowledge to God where you are today and repent so that you can enter into a renewal with God. (Revelation 2:5)

If you have drifted away from your first love and now return diligently to read God’s Word, asking Him to renew your hunger for His truths, the Lord will definitely answer that prayer. As you keep reading His Word, you will find God speaking to you directly and your spiritual strength will be renewed. In addition, God wants us to stir up one another to love and good deeds and to help each other renew and find our “first love” for God. In fact, one of the key aspects of Church is to have fellowship with our fellow believers and to strengthen each other. (Heb10:24-25)

So here are some points to check today as you renew your strength. Where are you at in your time with the Lord? What can you do to improve it? Who have you encouraged in their journey with Christ? Who do you know that is not meeting regularly for worship with fellow believers? Could they use the encouragement we share on Sundays? Why not ask them to join you next week?

### TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, I need to have my strength renewed for the situations I will face today. Renew my heart and help me to repent from where I have fallen. Restore my hunger for Your Word during these days of prayer, and help me to take time each day to renew my strength in Your Word. Give me time to reach out and encourage someone who is also on a journey with you. Thank you for the time I can spend each week in worship with fellow believers and for using what is shared to renew my strength. Together, may we, as a body of believers, know the ways we can show your love to others who are hurting and need your touch. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Love the way Jesus loves!**

**Pastor Steve**