



Dear Friends in Christ,

Prayer has always been the foundation of Istrouma. As we journey together in our *Generations* campaign, prayer is the central element to its success. I assembled this prayer and devotional guide for all of us to use over the next three weeks; to read from God's Word, reflect on the meaning of these scripture passages and respond in prayer.

As an encouragement for us to dig a little deeper, I've included opportunities for us to research each passage further. I also encourage you to record your experiences by entering a written response on the lines provided with each day's biblical passage.

It is only through God's power that Istrouma has been and will continue to be a life-changing church. Join me over these days as we seek a mighty outpouring of God's presence and power in our church.

Matt Surber
Senior Pastor

Our Awe! – Day 1

“Generation after generation stands in awe of Your work.....”

Psalm 145:4a (Msg)

Have you ever stood in awe of God’s work – His work in creation, your life, your family, your church? God is always at work pursuing a love relationship with His creation – you! His love for you is awesome! During the next 15 days, we will reflect on the wonder of God’s work in our lives and our church family through this *Generations Prayer and Devotional Guide*. Looking back at God’s activity in our lives encourages us as we look ahead with confidence that God is with us and nothing is impossible with Him!

Consider today the works of God that leave you in awe. Experience the wonder of His love for you and praise Him for all His works.

Compare Psalm 145:4a to Psalm 8 and Isaiah 40:21-31 for a greater understanding of God’s power and greatness.

- What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Story – Day 2

“Generation after generation stands in awe of Your work; each one tells stories of Your mighty acts.” Psalm 145:4 (Msg)

You have a faith story. It is a story of God’s activity in your life. What has He done for you? How has He demonstrated His love for you? These stories become awe inspiring for generations to come. They form a life message to be known and read by others.

Thank God for His mighty acts in your life. Take time today to share some of the stories of God’s awesome work in your life with a family member or friend.

Compare Psalm 145:4 with Psalm 78:4-8 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9 to discover the importance and benefits of telling future generations stories of God’s mighty acts.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Perspective – Day 3

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV)

God wants to do more in your life and in the life of Istrouma than we can possibly imagine. The only way that happens is through His power, and the only way it works is if God receives the glory. God will continue to glorify Himself through generations to come at Istrouma!

Thank God for the unimaginable plan He has for your life. Commit to God today that you want to honor and glorify Him in every area of your life. Thank Him for the incredible opportunity you have to be a part of a generation-changing church like Istrouma!

Research these verses in the context of Ephesians 3:14-21, and pray them back to God as an intercession for your church family.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Resolve – Day 4

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

We are to love God with everything that we are. His commands are to be always on our hearts. If you have a family, don't let God's Word just be something that your family hears at church on the weekends. Allow God and His Word to be the foundation of your home.

Commit to God, today, that you and your family, if applicable, are going to be faithful to spending time in His Word with the *Generations Prayer Guide*. Ask God to show you what it means to love Him with all your heart, soul and strength.

Dig a little deeper in Judges 2:10-22 to see what happens when one generation fails to share their faith with the next generation. Compare that with 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14-15

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our View – Day 5

*“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*
2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)

Istrouma was started by people acting in faith with the vision of what God had in store for the people of Baton Rouge and the world. The Bible defines faith as being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). The next phase of Istrouma may be unseen, but by faith we can have confidence that God is going to continue His work in people’s lives.

Ask God to stretch your faith. Tell God your desire is to learn how to fully depend on Him in every area of your life. Here’s how:

- Commit to Him the first day of the week in worship
- Commit to Him the first part of every day in prayer and Bible reading using this booklet as a guide
- Commit the first part of your income in giving back to God

Research 2 Corinthians 4 to see today’s verse in its context and discover the value of focusing on the unseen.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Value – Day 6

“For you are a holy people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be His own special treasure.” Deuteronomy 7:6 (NLT)

When we give our lives to Christ, we become children of God (John 1:12). Isn't that amazing? You are a part of God's family. You are a treasure to Him. When life gets hard or you just feel down, never forget that you are a special treasure to the God of the universe.

Thank God for giving you the opportunity to become a part of His family at Istrouma. If you have never received Christ, ask Jesus to come into your life today and ask Him to take complete control. Thank God for His great love for you and choose to live today like you are a child of the King.

Dig a little deeper in Deuteronomy 7:7-9 and discover why God chose Israel out of all the nations to be His own special treasure. Compare that to 1 Peter 2:9-12 and see why He chose you as well.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Inheritance – Day 7

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” 2 Corinthians 1:21-22(NIV)”

When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive purpose, forgiveness, hope, peace, love, etc. And these things are only an installment of all the benefits we receive from belonging to God. We get all of these things – and Heaven too!

Ask God to reveal the purpose He has for you today. Ask Him to also reveal to you those in your life that haven't been *sealed* by God with the mark of His ownership. As He reveals those people to you, decide today that you will begin sharing with them how they can experience all the blessings of belonging to God.

Compare 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13-14 to learn more about God's mark of ownership in your life and your inheritance in Him!

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Family – Day 8

“...you are...fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household...” Ephesians 2:19 (NIV)

Faith is not only about believing; it is also about belonging. We not only belong to God, but as Christians we belong to one another. We are a family. God’s plan for you is to be actively involved with other people in the local church. Your church family is here to support you, pray for you and help you in whatever ways you may need.

If you don’t feel connected to anyone at church, commit to God today that you are going to find a way to get involved (in ABF and Thrive, for example). As you pray, declare to God that you are going to be obedient to whatever He calls you to do. Thank God for a spiritually strong family like Istrouma.

Examine Ephesians 2:11-22 for a deeper understanding of the unity of the church and the importance of every member.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Uniqueness – Day 9

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.” Romans 12:4-5 (NLT)

As part of Christ’s body at Istrouma, you have a special function! Every member is important. We belong to one another! We need one another, and we each have work to do. When every member of the body does its work, the body is healthy and grows to be all God wants it to be. Your part is needed.

Ask God to show you the special function He has for you to do at Istrouma. Find your place and experience God’s awesome plan for your life as you serve Him and others by doing your part.

Dig deeper in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-16 to discover the special gift God may have given you for service in the church body.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Goal – Day 10

“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”

Philippians 2:2 (NAS)

As a church, we need to constantly love one another and work together. *Generations* is all about coming together as one body, wholeheartedly agreeing that we are a family and working toward the purposes of God.

Ask God to reveal to you how He would have you support and give through this spiritual journey called *Generations*. Your offering matters to God. When we all participate, we will see God accomplish amazing things!

Explore 1 Corinthians 12:18 and Ephesians 4:11-16 to discover the significance of each member in the body of Christ and the importance of every member doing their part.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Influence – Day 11

“Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

It is so important to surround yourself with people who will encourage you. Encouraging people put courage in you when your faith is weak. Discouraging people take away that courage. God has called us to build each other up by putting courage into one another.

Decide today that you are going to build people up! Ask God to provide you with opportunities to be an encouragement to others and ask Him for the strength to be faithful to those opportunities.

Examine 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25 to discover practical ways to build one another up in the Lord.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Strength – Day 12

“But you, dear friends, build yourself up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.” Jude 20 (NIV)

You will find it hard to build others up if you are not building yourself up along the way. We are to build ourselves up spiritually by getting into God’s Word on a consistent basis, by spending time in daily prayer and by sharing God’s love with others. If we are not building ourselves up, it will be difficult to build up anyone else in our lives.

Confess to God today if you haven’t been building yourself up spiritually as consistently as you should. Ask Him to grow you into the godly person He desires you to be.

Review Paul’s final charge in Acts 20:25-32 to the pastors and leaders of the church in Ephesus. What did he say would build them up in verses 28 and 32?

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Passion – Day 13 (Special Day of Prayer & Fasting)

“So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and He heard our prayer.” Ezra 8:23 (NLT)

Prayer and fasting are used many times throughout scripture on special occasions to seek God’s will. Many times prayer and fasting are shared by an entire community, like Istrouma, to show unity in purpose in seeking out the will of God. Unless prohibited for health reasons, consider fasting today and use the extra time to thank God for all the things that you may take for granted – food, shelter, clothing, etc. Pray that God would continue to shower His blessings on Istrouma as we move into the next phase of our service to Him.

Study Jesus’ instructions on fasting in Matthew 6:16-18; compare that with God’s chosen fast in Isaiah 58.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Sacrifice – Day 14

“And now because of my devotion to the temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction... Now then, who will follow my example? Who is willing to give offerings to the Lord today?... The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord....”

1 Chronicles 29:3a-5b, 9a (NLT)

King David had a dream to build a great temple for God. God honored David's dream and allowed his son, Solomon, to fulfill that dream. In preparation, David gave needed resources and offerings for the construction of the temple. Then he challenged others to follow his example. When the people did, they experienced the same joy in giving as David.

Pray that God will show you what He would have you give for *Generations*. David's offering outlived him and blessed generations to come. Experience the joy of giving freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.

Investigate David's dream to build a temple in 2 Samuel 7. Review his plans and provisions for the temple in 1 Chronicles 28-29.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Our Supply – Day 15

“...everything we have has come from You, and we give You only what You first gave us.” 1 Chronicles 29:14b (NLT)

What do you have that God has not given you? Our gifts to God are an offering of thanks for all He has given us. Someone once said, “Your life is a gift from God. What you do with it is your gift back to God.”

What are you building with your earthly life that will last for generations to come? This weekend is our commitment weekend for *Generations*. It is a tangible way to exercise our faith in building something that will outlive us and affect future generations. Allow God to stretch your faith by giving your greatest offering that reflects your love for Him.

Dig deeper into Jesus’ instruction on where to invest your treasure for eternal benefit in Matthew 6:19-24. Then read Matthew 6:25-34 to discover where to find real security.

- What do I sense God has spoken to my heart?

- My prayer response:

- My impression of what God wants me to do:

Generations Family Conference During the week of October 19-25, 2008

We invite you to take time as a family (or as a group of close friends) to determine what God is leading you give to Istrouma's Generations campaign.

When you gather, open the conference with a prayer, inviting God's presence and leadership and asking God to provide a spirit of love, unity and unselfishness.

Read the following scripture passages and ask family members to answer the question listed after each one.

- Proverbs 3:9-10 To whom do we give?
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 What attitude should guide our giving?

Ask each family member to talk about commitments he or she could make in order to give to God through the Generations campaign over the next three years. Be sure to include each child so that every family member has the opportunity to experience the joy of giving to God.

Spend time praying as a family, thanking God for blessing you with what you have, thanking Him for our great church family and asking for guidance in your giving.

Decide as a family what you will give and write it down on the commitment card you received. Close the conference with a prayer of commitment, asking God to provide for your family as you step out in faith, asking him to give you joy in giving and thanking Him for what He has done and will do.

Place the Generations Commitment Card in its envelope and bring it to the worship service on October 26. During the service, each family will turn in their commitment card. If you are going to miss the service, please bring your commitment card by the church office or mail it to the church.