

## **BLESS 2026**

2 January 2026

### **SUMMARY:**

This message launches a 21-day prayer initiative calling believers to consecrate the year 2026 to God rather than simply making New Year's resolutions. Drawing from Joshua 3, the message emphasizes that before God performs wonders, His people must sanctify themselves and surrender completely to His will. The message challenges the congregation to move beyond performance-based Christianity to a posture of attentiveness and surrender, recognizing that God's movement is always preceded by His people's stillness. Bruce Downes reflects on decades of ministry reaching 194 of 195 countries worldwide, not through strategic planning but through following God's leading like the Israelites followed the pillar of fire. The core message is that consecration - setting the year apart as holy and belonging entirely to God - must precede revelation and divine action. This is not about wishing for a successful year, but declaring the year surrendered to God's purposes, following wherever He leads regardless of the cost.

### **KEY POINTS**

- Consecration means setting apart the entire year as belonging to God, not merely hoping for personal success
- God's wonders and miraculous movements are always preceded by His people's consecration and stillness
- Following God requires surrender of our own plans, ambitions, and directions in favor of His leading
- Like the Israelites at the Jordan River, we face unknown territory that requires trust in God's presence rather than our own capacity
- Consecration is not performance or ritual but a spiritual orientation of attentiveness and surrender
- Fire from God falls only on sacrifice. Blessing requires our willingness to lay down our lives and plans
- The ministry's global reach to 194 countries came through obedience to God's call, not human strategy
- True Christian living means saying "not me, but You" and walking in dependence on God's direction
- The 21 days of prayer are about declaring the year holy and asking God to do what we cannot do in our own strength

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:**

- Joshua 3:1-6 (primary focus)
- Joshua 3:5 ("Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you")
- Exodus 13:21 (the pillar of cloud and fire leading Israel)
- John 5:19 (Jesus doing only what He sees the Father doing)

**QUOTES**

- Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. We will walk into the promised land.
- Bless 2026 is not to wish it well. It is to set it apart. It is to speak over it what is more true than this year, like every year belongs to the Lord.
- Consecration is not performance, it's attentiveness. It's not ambition, it's surrender. It's not a magic ritual to secure outcomes.
- To follow the fire and not our feelings. In a world that's driven by logic, data, efficiency, all have their place. That kind of life can seem foolish.
- Lord, do in me whatever you must so that you can do through me whatever you will.
- In Scripture, fire doesn't fall randomly. Fire falls only on sacrifice.
- If God called you to heaven in 2026, are you ready? I am. I'm ready to go today. Are you?

**BLESS 2026**  
**SMALL GROUP GUIDE**

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer.

**ICE BREAKER**

Question: What's one thing you typically hope for or expect at the start of a new year? How is this year feeling different for you?KEY

**TAKEAWAYS**

1. **Consecration precedes blessing** - We must set apart 2026 as holy before we see what God will do
2. **Surrender over success** - This year isn't about our plans working out, but about following God's direction
3. **God's wonders require our stillness** - God's movement is almost always preceded by His people's stillness
4. **Following fire, not feelings** - Like Israel following the pillar of fire, we must follow God's presence, not our logic
5. **Fire falls on sacrifice** - God's power comes when we lay down our lives in surrender

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

### **Part 1: Understanding Consecration (15-20 minutes)**

1. The message defined consecration as "setting apart" rather than just "wishing for a good year." What's the difference between these two approaches to 2026?
2. Bruce Downes shared: "Consecration is not performance, it's attentiveness. It's not ambition, it's surrender." Which of these do you struggle with more - trying to perform for God or trying to control outcomes through your own ambition? Why?
3. Read Joshua 3:1-6 together. The Israelites were told "you have not passed this way before." What does it mean that we're entering territory we've never been in before? How does that make you feel?

### **Part 2: Personal Application (15-20 minutes)**

1. The message asks: "What might God do this year in you?" Take a moment of silence, then share: What area of your life do you sense God asking you to consecrate (set apart) for Him this year?
2. Bruce Downes said, "Will I do what He asks me? Will I walk the way He wants? Will I give what He demands?" These are challenging questions. What makes genuine consecration frightening? What are you afraid of surrendering?
3. The message emphasized that "fire falls only on sacrifice." What sacrifice might God be asking you to make as you enter 2026? (This could be time, habits, relationships, plans, etc.)

### **Part 3: Living It Out (15-20 minutes)**

1. The message challenged us: "To follow the fire and not our feelings." Share about a time when following God required you to go against your feelings or logic. What happened?
2. Bruce Downes shared his own story of being called to "proclaim God's glory to the ends of the earth" and how people ridiculed him. Has God put something on your heart that others don't understand? How do you stay faithful when others doubt?
3. The 21 Days of Prayer and Expectation are about saying to God: "Lord, do in me whatever you must so that you can do through me whatever you will." What would change in your daily life if you truly prayed this prayer?

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

### **Individual Commitments:**

- **Daily:** Commit to the 21 Days of Prayer and Expectation (10-15 minutes daily)
- **Weekly:** Identify one area of your life to actively surrender to God this week
- **Monthly:** Journal about what God is doing through this consecration process

### **Group Commitments:**

- Share prayer requests specifically related to consecrating 2026 to God
- Check in with one another throughout the 21 days
- Consider fasting together one day during the 21 days as a group sacrifice

### **Reflection Exercise (Do together or as homework):**

Complete these sentences:

- "The area of my life I'm most reluctant to consecrate is..."
- "If I truly surrendered 2026 to God, I would need to..."
- "The 'wonder' I'm hoping God will do in my life this year is..."
- "To follow God's fire instead of my feelings, I need to..."

## **PRAYER FOCUS (15-20 MINUTES)**

### **Guided Prayer Time:**

1. **Confession** - Ask God to reveal areas where you've been trying to control rather than consecrate
2. **Consecration** - Pray together: "Lord, 2026 is not mine. It is Yours. Show me where to walk."
3. **Expectation** - Ask God for specific "wonders" He wants to do in your lives, families, and community
4. **Intercession** - Pray for one another's areas of surrender and sacrifice

**Close by praying the consecration prayer together:** "Lord, do in me whatever You must, so that You can do through me whatever You will."

## **BEFORE NEXT WEEK**

- Begin the 21 Days of Prayer and Expectation
- Read Joshua chapters 3-4 (the complete story of crossing the Jordan)
- Write down one specific way you will consecrate this week to God
- Share your commitment with at least one person for accountability

**LEADER NOTES**

- This is not about making people feel guilty about past failures
- Consecration is an invitation, not a burden
- Create space for silence and reflection - don't rush through questions
- Be vulnerable yourself about your own struggles with surrender
- Celebrate even small steps of consecration
- Remember: "God's movement is preceded by His people's stillness"

**If someone shares they're not ready to consecrate 2026:** That's okay. As the message said, "If you're not serious, don't." Encourage them to be honest with God about where they are and to ask Him to prepare their heart.