

LECTIO 365

is a daily devotional resource that helps you pray the Bible every day.

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Written by leaders from the 24-7 Prayer movement, and produced in partnership with CWR, this resource helps you engage with Scripture to inspire prayer and shape your life.

Journey through the year with Pete Greig, Carla Harding, Phil Togwell, Jill Weber and international guest writers.

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November 2020

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

[Month of November 2020](#)

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November 01 2020 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

when we remember and give thanks for the heroes of our faith, sung and unsung, past and present.

Pause and pray

Remembering the cloud of witnesses all around, I make the words of Hebrews 12 my prayer...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Pause and pray

‘We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...’ Who do I see in this great cloud?

Inevitably there will be well-known Christians whose example inspires me, but today, I’m reminded that the majority of the world’s saints are anonymous. Their lives and legacy are known only to a few, or maybe only to God.

In C.S. Lewis’ masterpiece The Great Divorce, the narrator dreams of a great procession in heaven, celebrating an unknown woman; one of the great heroes of our faith, and she is so beautiful he cannot capture her appearance in words...

“Is it?...is it?” I whispered to my guide.

“Not at all,” said he. “It’s someone ye’ll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green.”

“She seems to be...well, a person of particular importance?”

“Aye. She is one of the great ones. Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things.”...

“And who are all these young men and women on each side?”

“They are her sons and daughters.”

“She must have had a very large family, Sir.”

“Every young man or boy that met her became her son – even if it was only the boy that brought the meat to her back door. Every girl that met her was her daughter.”

“...It is like when you throw a stone into a pool, and the concentric waves spread out further and further. Who knows where it will end? Redeemed humanity is still young, it has

*hardly come to its full strength. But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint such as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life.” **

**C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce, p118*

Pause and pray

Father, I thank You for the cloud of witnesses cheering me on. For the heroes whose names I know and whose lives have shaped my own; and the heroes whose names I don’t know and whose lives I will only learn about in heaven.

Pause and pray

Jesus, thank You for the everyday saints who helped me find You. Help me to follow in their footsteps today.

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, help me to embrace the call to be a nobody like Sarah Smith. I surrender my need to be significant, and for my achievements for You to be seen and celebrated by others. Help me to run the race marked out before me with humility and perseverance.

Pause and pray

As I return to Hebrews 12 I invite You, Holy Spirit, to highlight a word or phrase to me today.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3

This isn’t just nostalgia or vague mysticism; this encouragement is very practical. The writer of Hebrews says that our awareness of this cloud of witnesses should energize us to make sacrifices, to throw off all that hinders and to live holy lives for Jesus. This is one of the reasons Lectio 365 celebrates heroes of the faith on feast days throughout the year.

How might I cultivate a greater awareness of heroes like these? Are there biographies I could read? Could I place a photo of someone who’s influenced me in a place I would see it daily? Or, if I am thinking of a hero who is still living, could I reach out to them today, thank them for how they have encouraged me and seek their advice?

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God’s image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God’s infinite greatness.

*May God’s Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.***

***Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info*

November 02 2020 (click for audio)

Alphonsus Rodriguez: Hero of Hospitality

His official Feast Day fell on Saturday, October 31st, Halloween, and so we're choosing to remember Rodríguez today instead. Tomorrow, we will be praying about the US election.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Lord, I hear You knocking at the door, asking to come in. You are welcome in my life today and always. Make yourself at home in my heart, my home and my hidden world today. (Rev.3:20)

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice today in the lavish hospitality of God, joining in the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 23:

*You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.
Psalm 23:5-6*

Pause and pray

Alphonsus Rodríguez felt like a failure. Born in 1533 in Segovia, Spain, his life was very hard. At the age of fourteen he was forced to leave school by the sudden death of his father, in order to care for the family business. A little later, in his twenties, he married and had three children but tragedy struck again: his wife died. And so did all his children. In his thirties he was driven to the brink of financial ruin. And then, at the age of forty, he tried to join a Jesuit monastery but was considered too old and too uneducated to become a priest.

Instead, Alphonsus was sent to a Jesuit College on the Spanish island of Majorca where he served as a porter and doorkeeper for the rest of his life. Never promoted, never priested, Alphonsus turned door-keeping into a sacramental duty. Every time the doorbell rang he would say, 'I'm coming, Lord!' and would then welcome the visitor as Christ himself.

Over the years countless brilliant young priests passed through that college. They were enjoying opportunities and privileges Alphonsus had been denied, but he welcomed each one lavishly, without any hint of resentment and many of them turned to him for spiritual counsel.

One of these young priests, a 25-year-old named Peter Claver, began meeting daily with Alphonsus who was by then seventy-two years old. Eventually the old man encouraged Peter to embark upon a great adventure to South America where he was to work tirelessly for the rest of his life, caring for slaves.

Peter Claver was later recognized as a saint for his heroic efforts as *el esclavo de los esclavos*, 'the slave

to the slaves'. And Alphonsus Rodríguez was also made a saint, canonized for his own brand of quiet heroism expressed in a life of humility, hospitality and friendship that changed the world.

The great poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote a poem celebrating the humble service of his fellow Jesuit, Alphonsus Rodriguez:

*HONOR is flashed off exploit, so we say;
And those strokes once that gashed flesh or galled shield
Should tongue that time now, trumpet now that field,
And, on the fighter, forge his glorious day.
On Christ they do and on the martyr may;
But be the war within, the brand we wield
Unseen, the heroic breast not outward-stealed,
Earth hears no hurtle then from fiercest fray.
Yet God (that hews mountain and continent,
Earth, all, out; who, with trickling increment,
Veins violets and tall trees makes more and more)
Could crowd career with conquest while there went
Those years and years by of world without event
That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.**

**Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'In Honor of St Alphonsus Rodriguez', Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits (ed. Michael Harter, Loyola Press, 2004) p131*

I love that line '*Those years and years by of world without event.*' Life can often feel uneventful. As if life is passing me by. As if everyone else is going on great adventures, having great experiences, making their mark, while I am left at home alone, unknown and unnoticed merely watching the door.

Ask

Thinking ahead to some of the mundane moments that await me in the coming day – the chores, the meetings, the thankless tasks – I ask You, Lord, to help me to treat every person I encounter as if they are You, and to greet every single activity as an opportunity to show your love.

Pause and pray

When I think about calling, about destiny, about changing the world, I tend to assign myself a heroic role. I easily forget that an ordinary job on minimum wage can be a world-changing vocation. For millions of people, the Great Commission is outworked behind closed doors, anonymously raising children, cooking meals, seeking to be faithful in an unglamorous daily routine.

And so, thinking of someone like this, I pray for them to know the smile of God today.

Pause and pray

Yield

The apostle Paul says:

Sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way... And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep

*in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ.
Col. 3:17,22-24 (MSG)*

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield to the ordinariness of my life. Help me to turn the mundane chores of this day into sacraments - moments of encounter with You. Help me to answer the door - or the phone, or emails today - like Alphonsus Rodriguez, with an attitude that says, 'I'm coming Lord!' I surrender my desire to be noticed and honored, asking only that I may one day hear you say, 'Well done, my good and faithful child.'

Yielding Promise

And so, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, my heart cries, 'I'm coming Lord!' And he says: 'If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.' (Rev.3:20)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 03 2020 (click for audio)

Prayers for the U.S. Election

Whether or not you are American, and whatever your political perspective, this is a decision that will affect the world.

Today, therefore, we're going to interrupt our usual rhythm to focus our prayers on this globally significant moment and to pray for our leaders, wherever we are.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

On this significant day, when emotions are running so high, and America seems so deeply divided, I pray the famous prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi: 'Lord, make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred, let me bring Your love, where there is injury, Your pardon Lord, and where there's doubt, true faith in You.'

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's sovereignty over times, seasons and nations today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of the prophet Daniel:

*Praise the name of God forever and ever,
for he has all wisdom and power.
He controls the course of world events;
he removes kings and sets up other kings.
He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the scholars.
He reveals deep and mysterious things
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,
though he is surrounded by light.
I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors,
for you have given me wisdom and strength.*

Daniel 2:20-23

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Paul's exhortation to prioritize intercession for our political leaders.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:1-3

At the time Paul wrote these words there wasn't a single Christian national leader anywhere in the world. Whatever the outcome of today's election, whoever ends up in The White House, and wherever we are in the world, we are expected to pray for our leaders.

For Timothy, this meant praying for Emperor Nero whose vanity and hostility towards Christians is legendary. Many centuries earlier, Jeremiah told the Jewish exiles to pray for Babylon's peace and prosperity. Two centuries after Paul's letter, the Church Father Tertullian wrote about praying 'for the emperors... and those in power, that their reign may continue, that the state may be at peace, and that the end of the world may be postponed.*

*Tertullian *Apology* tr. T.R. Glover, Loeb Classical Library (Heinemann, 1931), 39.2

Ask

When the outcome of today's election is announced, millions of people in America and around the world will inevitably feel as if the world has ended, and millions more that the Kingdom has come. Neither conclusion will be remotely correct.

How will I feel if my favored candidate is not chosen? I take time now to imagine that scenario and to ask God for grace to pray for the American president.

Pause and pray

I take time now to obey Paul's apostolic command by praying earnestly for those in authority over me in my nation, that they will lead with integrity, with wisdom beyond their own wisdom, on behalf of the poor.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:1-3

My motivation in praying for those in authority over me is 'that we may live peaceful and quiet lives' and that 'all people [should] come to a knowledge of the truth.' I pray now that God would heal deep wounds of division in America and around the world; that peace would prevail and that the gospel would advance powerfully.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

King Jesus, I cast my vote for You today. I surrender again to Your way, Your will, Your sovereign plan for my nation. You are the King of kings, the Lord of Lords, the Prince of Peace, the Healer and the hope of the nations. Maranatha. Let Your Kingdom come.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed' (Isaiah 54:10)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 04 2020 (click for audio)

Chosen King

Today we embark upon a new Lectio series exploring the ancient songs of God's people in the Psalms.

With emotions running high in our world, the Psalms anchor us in a bigger story, assuring us of God's leadership and love.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving Lord, You looked out on the chaotic crowds 2000 years ago with compassion, just as you did 3,000 years ago when the earliest Psalms were written, just as you do today. Stir my heart with love for those who feel lost.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's sovereign purpose and protection today, joining in the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 46:

*God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.
Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!...
The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!
God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!
The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress.
Psalm 46:1-3, 6-7*

Pause and pray

When today's Psalm was chosen for today's reading, we had no idea that it would fall on the day after the US election.

*Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together against the Lord
and against his anointed one.
"Let us break their chains," they cry,
"and free ourselves from slavery to God."
But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.*

*Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.
For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."
The king proclaims the Lord's decree:
"The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.
Today I have become your Father.
Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.
Psalm 2:1-8 NLT*

'Ask and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.' When these words were first spoken over King David, there was a sense of colonial expansion and nationalistic ambition. Perhaps this makes me uncomfortable?

But when this Psalm is fulfilled in Jesus, its tone changes completely. He too asks for the nations, but to bless and not oppress them. His vast ambition is to reclaim that which is rightfully His own, to liberate 'the whole earth' from a brutal dictator. And of course, His way is love

Ask

'Why are the nations so angry?' the Psalmist inquires. It's a good question. Is there any bitterness within me today towards those who disagree with me?

I ask you Lord, to root out hatred. Make my speech entirely kind and all my attitudes loving.

Pause and pray

God says in this Psalm, 'I have placed my chosen king on the throne.' How do I feel about this? I pray now for the leader of my nation and for the rule and reign of Jesus to prevail in my land.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together against the Lord
and against his anointed one.
"Let us break their chains," they cry,
"and free ourselves from slavery to God."
But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.
For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."
The king proclaims the Lord's decree:*

*"The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.
Today I have become your Father.
Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.
Psalm 2:1-8 NLT*

Are there particular nations, regions or cultures that God has put on my heart? The Lord says: 'Ask, and I will give you [these places] as your inheritance.'

What might it mean to inherit them? Do I dare to ask for that now?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Father God, I receive Your love for me;
send me out to love the world for you.
Jesus Christ, I believe You live in me;
send me out to show the world it's true.
Holy Spirit, I perceive Your presence in my life;
send me out to serve the world like you.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says to me:

Do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 05 2020 (click for audio)

The Gift of Sleep

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Stir me up today Lord, I pray, with fresh compassion for those 'harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.' You told Your disciples to 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Matthew 9:36) Well, here I am. Lord, send me.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the way the Lord watches over my life continually, joining in the gratitude of all God's people in the words of Psalm 121:

*I look up to the mountains—
does my help come from there?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth!
He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
The Lord himself watches over you!
The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.
The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
The Lord keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,
both now and forever."*
Psalm 121:1-8

Pause and pray

In today's Psalm, notice the fierce resistance that David is facing and the swaggering defiance with which he trusts the Lord...

*O Lord, I have so many enemies;
so many are against me.
So many are saying,
"God will never rescue him!"
But you, O Lord, are a shield around me;
you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.
I cried out to the Lord,
and he answered me from his holy mountain.*

*I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the Lord was watching over me.
I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.
Psalm 3:1-6 NLT*

In movies things happen in a certain order. There's a tidy narrative arc. But in real life, everything comes at once. In this Psalm David is being bombarded with extremes of emotion. On one hand, many detractors are writing him off, and thousands are advancing against him 'on every side'. It's terrifying.

But on the other hand, he's sleeping soundly at night, experiencing God's protection, and enjoying unusual favor. How is this possible? The answer comes in verse 4: 'I cried out to the Lord, and he answered me.'

Ask

What enemies am I facing? Is there anything disturbing my sleep? I take a little time now simply to 'cry out to the Lord', asking him to be 'a shield around me' and 'the one who holds my head high.'

Pause and pray

Naming just one person before the Lord now, I pray the three-fold blessing of verse 4 over their lives, asking the Lord to (1) *shield them*, (2) to *honor them* and (3) to *lift their head* to see His face today.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*O Lord, I have so many enemies;
so many are against me.
So many are saying,
"God will never rescue him!"
But you, O Lord, are a shield around me;
you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.
I cried out to the Lord,
and he answered me from his holy mountain.
I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the Lord was watching over me.
I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.
Psalm 3:1-6 NLT*

30% of the population struggles with some form of insomnia. But David slept like a baby because he knew that the Lord was watching over him.

Sleep is one of God's great blessings, as every parent and anyone who's ever woken in the night, knows. It reduces stress, sharpens memory, reduces the risk of depression and even helps weight-loss!

Psalm 127:2 says that 'God grants sleep to those he loves'. It's something I should pray for and address practically too, especially when life is tough.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Father God, I receive Your love for me;
send me out to love the world for You.
Jesus Christ, I believe You live in me;
send me out to show the world it's true.
Holy Spirit, I perceive Your presence in my life;
send me out to serve the world with You.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says:

'When you call out to Me, I will answer you; I will be with you in trouble. I will deliver and honor you. With long life I will satisfy you and show you my salvation.' (Psalm 91:15-16)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 06 2020 (click for audio)

I Wonder

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Stir me up today Lord, I pray, with fresh compassion for those 'harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.' You told Your disciples to 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Matthew 9:36) Well, here I am. Lord, send me.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the simple things of life, joining in the ancient song of all God's people in the comforting words of Psalm 131:

*Lord, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty.
I don't concern myself with matters too great
or too awesome for me to grasp.
Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk.
Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, put your hope in the Lord—
now and always.
Psalm 131:1-3*

Pause and pray

In today's reading we get an insight into the extraordinary authority God has given us, to exercise dominion over everything he has made...

*When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?
Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!
Psalm 8:3-9 NLT*

This Psalm is remarkable for its anthropology as much as its theology. King David has an

extraordinarily high view of humanity. We are, he says, 'only a little lower than God' with 'all things' under our authority.

When Emerson Hall – the famous philosophy department at Harvard University – was built, the psychologist and philosopher William James suggested that a suitable inscription for the stone lintel over the doors should be a line from the Greek philosopher Protagoras: 'Man is the measure of all things.'

But when the scaffolding was removed, he saw with dismay that a line from today's Psalm had been chosen instead by the university president. 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?' (Ps 8:4 KJV)

This vast, mysterious universe cannot possibly be shrunk to the size of the human brain. We are too small. It is too big. We are neither the beginning, the ending nor the arbiter of reality.

Ask

What part of God's creation do I have particular responsibility to oversee? Is it a family? A garden? A team at work? The Psalmist describes the Lord's 'majestic name [filling] the earth.' How might I fill this little patch of the earth with the glory of His name today?

Pause and pray

I pray now for my government to prioritize protecting the environment, remembering that the UN Climate Change Conference was originally scheduled to be taking place right now in Glasgow, Scotland, but has been postponed by Covid-19 to this time next year.

I pray that my political leaders will do what is right even if it's not popular, and that this delay will not detract from the urgency of this agenda.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?
Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*

Psalm 8:3-9 NLT

I love King David's awe as he surveys the night sky. I've often felt my own smallness within the

vastness of God's creation, but also the sense of significance David describes too. I am known and loved by the Creator of 100 billion galaxies. He has 'crowned [me] with glory and honor'.

Whenever I catch a glimpse of the greatness of God – whether it's under the stars or singing a song in worship – I find myself simultaneously diminished to a place of greater humility, and exalted to a place of greater authority. Without worship I would be doomed to choose between insignificance or arrogance. When I kneel I learn to rule.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Father God, I receive your love for me;
send me out to love the world for you.
Jesus Christ, I believe you live in me;
send me out to show the world it's true.
Holy Spirit, I perceive your presence in my life
send me out to serve the world with You.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says:

'In the time of my favor. I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, "Come out," and to those in darkness, "Be free!" (Isaiah 49:8-9)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 07 2020 (click for audio)

The Antidote to Stress

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Stir me up today Lord, I pray, with fresh compassion for those 'harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.' You told Your disciples to 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Matthew 9:36) Well, here I am. Lord, send me.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the wonderful promises God has given me today, joining in the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 56:

*This I know: God is on my side!
I praise God for what he has promised;
yes, I praise the Lord for what he has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?
Psalm 56:9b-11*

Pause and pray

In today's Psalm, King David celebrates God as the King of the nations and the champion of the oppressed.

*The Lord reigns for ever;
he has established his throne for judgment.
He rules the world in righteousness
and judges the peoples with equity.
The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.
Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.
For he who avenges blood remembers;
he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.
Psalm 9:7-12*

David says of the Lord: 'Those who know your name trust in you.' (v.10) To know God is to find him completely consistent, totally reliable, utterly true. The more we worship the less we worry. The more we lift our eyes from our own problems to focus instead on the goodness of God, the less we stress.

Any friend of God tends, therefore, to become an increasingly non-anxious presence. They become less intense, less controlling, more peaceful the longer they walk with the Lord. Why? Because they have fewer problems? No! Because they have all the answers? No! Because they know that love wins.

In the words of the 14th century nun, Julian of Norwich, they have learned to trust in every circumstance that 'all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.'*

*Julian of Norwich, *All Will Be Well* (compiled Richard Chilson, Ave Maria Press, 2008) p81

Ask

What am I worried about today? Clenching these concerns in both fists I slowly relax my grip, relinquishing them into the hands of my Heavenly Father and praying three times: *Lord, I trust You.*'

Pause and pray

David says in this Psalm that God 'does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.' (v.12) Thinking now of someone afflicted in body, mind or spirit, I imagine their cries rising to the Lord, and the attentiveness on his face as he hears them. I pray the prayer known as the *Kyrie eleison* three times: '*Lord, have mercy.*'

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The Lord reigns for ever;
he has established his throne for judgment.
He rules the world in righteousness
and judges the peoples with equity.
The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.
Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.
For he who avenges blood remembers;
he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.*
Psalm 9:7-12

Pedro Arrupe was a missionary to Japan when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. In 1965 he was elected head of the Jesuit Order and in later life he endured a series of debilitating strokes. Through so many trials, he came to trust the Lord in a profound way as his 'stronghold in times of trouble.'

Finding himself severely disabled he confided to his journal, 'More than ever I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. But now there is a difference. The initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself to be totally in God's hands.'**

** Michael Harter, SJ (ed), *Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits* (Loyola Press, 2004)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Father God, I receive Your love for me;
send me out to love the world for You.
Jesus Christ, I believe You live in me;
send me out to show the world it's true.
Holy Spirit, I perceive Your presence in my life
send me out to serve the world with You.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says to me:

*Trust in me and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in me
and I will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to me
trust in me and I will do this.
Ps. 37: 3-5 (adapted into the first person)*

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 08 2020 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today we leave our usual P.R.A.Y rhythms behind and pray in a simpler way on this day of rest.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel writes, 'Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul.'*

* Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (FSG Classics) p1

And so as I settle into prayer now, Lord, show me what it means to 'care for the seeds of eternity in my soul'. Help me to stop counting the minutes; even now, to relinquish control. Inspire me to live and breathe with greater ease, as an eternal being loved by You.

Pause and pray

In the past week we have thought about the US election, we've celebrated the life of a hero of hospitality, Alphonsus Rodríguez, and as we've embarked upon our journey in the Psalms, there has been a particular focus over the last few days on mission.

But today I stop striving to sort all the world's problems out, stop striving to save the world, and instead I just make space for the Lord to preach the gospel to me, to come and save me. Sunday is a day to be born again – again! And so I take time now to get right with God, to repent of my sins, to give thanks for the cross, to receive the Spirit once more.

Pause and pray

Turning my attention outwards, I pray for the gospel community as it gathers today:

Lord, You told us to ask the Father to send out workers to bring in the harvest. This we must do. Please ignite a renewed passion for the gospel in our lives and a sense of urgency in our churches. May we preach the way of salvation clearly today, so that many might see and believe and put their trust in You. Mobilize us as a missionary movement, wherever we live and to every tribe and tongue.

Holy Spirit, revive us again. Come to us once more as You came to that first prayer room in Jerusalem that we might be propelled out of our meetings and onto the streets with new courage to preach the gospel, that thousands might encounter the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ.

I take a moment now to earth these massive prayers in my own little life, naming friends, family members or colleagues who don't yet know Jesus. I ask for opportunities to share 'the hope that (I) have' (1 Pet. 3:15) with at least one of these people this week.

Pause and pray

Finally, I dedicate myself afresh to the mission of God:

Thank You, Father, that You loved the world so much that You sent Your only Son,

Please help me to love the world with an extraordinary generosity.

Thank You, Jesus, that You gave up everything and died for me.

Please help me to lay down my life for those who don't yet know You.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for giving those first disciples such courage and power.

Please fill me now with that same boldness this week.

Pause and pray

Sabbath blessing

May this day bring sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness

in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

*May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.***

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

November 09 2020 (click for audio)

Ruthless Trust

Week by week we cycle systematically through six biblical priorities, derived from the Rule of The Order of the Mustard Seed. These are: prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's activity in my life and in the world, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 92:

*You thrill me, Lord, with all you have done for me!
I sing for joy because of what you have done.
O Lord, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts.
Psalm 92:4-5*

Pause and pray

I'm going to spend the whole of this week reflecting on one of the most uplifting and comforting Psalms. It's particularly cherished by those struggling with anxiety and chronic illnesses, but this week I'm going to focus on its message of divine hospitality – the welcome of God.

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.'
Psalm 91:1-2*

The Psalmist describes God as the one 'in whom I trust', but this isn't easy. I mostly try to follow Jesus, but then I live my life in my own way, I make my own decisions, I try to be in complete control of everything. And then the Holy Spirit interrupts with, 'It's OK. I'll guide you, just trust me.'

This sounds great, it doesn't always feel great to give up control, so I often ignore the invitation and continue doing things my own way. Undeterred, the Holy Spirit simply repeats, 'Trust me'. And on and on it goes, every single day.

As much as I may try to avoid it, trust is the pathway to making myself at home in the shelter of the Most High, in the shadow of the Almighty.

Ask

In what areas of my life is the Holy Spirit asking me to relinquish control and trust Him instead today?

Pause and pray

As I think of those beautiful phrases, 'the shelter of the Most High' and 'rest in the shadow of the Almighty', who do I know that needs to experience God's protection and comfort in this way today?

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.'
Psalm 91:1-2*

'I will say of the Lord', says the Psalmist, indicating that trust isn't something I feel, but a choice that I have to make every day.

'Ruthless trust,' says the author Brennan Manning, 'is an unerring sense, way deep down, that beneath the surface agitation, boredom, and insecurity of life, it's gonna be all right. Ill winds may blow, more character defects may surface, sickness may visit, and friends will surely die; but a stubborn, irrefutable certainty persists that God is with us in our struggle to be faithful.'*

*Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust* (2002) p180

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

This isn't easy for me, but I surrender control of my life to You once again, Heavenly Father. Give me 'a stubborn, irrefutable certainty' that You can be trusted with my bank account, with my family and those I love, with my health and my future. And all the other things that I've been trying to control without You, I relinquish those to You as well. I trust You, help me with my lack of trust.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the promise in the book of Nahum that, 'The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble.' And that he 'cares for those who trust in him.' (Nahum 1:7)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 10 2020 (click for audio)

Under His Wings

Together we will pray (**P.R.A.Y.**) very simply each day – ‘P’: PAUSING to be still. ‘R’: REJOICING with a Psalm and REFLECTING on a scripture relating to hospitality. ‘A’: ASKING God to help us and others and ‘Y’: YIELDING to His will in our lives, come what may.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God’s majesty, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 93:

*The Lord is king! He is robed in majesty.
Indeed, the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength.
The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
Your throne, O Lord, has stood from time immemorial.
You yourself are from the everlasting past.
Psalm 93:1-2*

Pause and pray

Today, I am continuing to reflect on the theme of God’s hospitality as found in Psalm 91.

*Surely he will save you
from the Fowler’s snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
Psalm 91:3-4*

The Psalmist says that God will cover me with His wings. Jesus says something similar hundreds of years later as he approaches Jerusalem for the last time. ‘How I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...’ (Matthew 23:37)

When faced with danger, a mother bird will often spread her wings over and around her chicks. She will cover them and she won’t hesitate to sacrifice herself if it means that she can protect them. Beneath her wings, her chicks know that there is refuge and safety.

In the same way, I am invited to hide beneath God’s outstretched wings, to find refuge and safety.

Ask

I imagine myself crouching down beneath enormous wings, surrounded and safe and protected. In what areas of my life do I feel vulnerable right now? I bring these to You, God, and I ask You to cover me, to keep me safe.

Pause and pray

As I think about my local community, who may be feeling vulnerable right now? Those who live in abusive households. Those who have no option but to sleep on the streets. Those who are elderly and alone. I ask you, God, to cover them and keep them safe.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Surely he will save you
from the Fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
Psalm 91:3-4*

God will 'save you from the deadly pestilence', writes the Psalmist in today's passage. Other translations say 'deadly sickness' or 'deadly disease'. This, of course, makes me think about the coronavirus pandemic, which has already claimed more than one million lives around the world.

I take a few moments to pray, using the words of this Psalm; God, I ask You to save us from this deadly disease.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for saving me. Thank you for stretching out Your wings to cover me. Shield me as I yield myself to you.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for David's conviction that in days of trouble God will 'keep me safe in his dwelling, (and) he will hide me...' (Psalm 27:5)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.

November 11 2020 (click for audio)

Armistice Day

On this day we are interrupting our usual rhythm to remember those who lost their lives during the First World War, to give thanks for peace, and also to pray for those who are currently living through conflict.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Almighty God, You are my 'ever-present help in times of trouble' (Ps. 46:1) Speak with me now as I spend this time with You. May Your presence be peace to me, Your promises fuel faith in me, and Your purpose be fulfilled in me throughout the day to come

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's faithfulness, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 119:

*Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven.
Your faithfulness extends to every generation,
as enduring as the earth you created.*

Psalm 119:89-90

Pause and pray

On this day in 1918, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the armistice agreement was signed between the Allied forces and Germany to bring World War One to an end. At this historic moment, the fighting stopped; weapons were laid down, the peace bells rang out, and soldiers finally returned home to their families.

It is difficult to begin to imagine the relief of that historic hour. The horrors of the war had destroyed thousands of lives on both sides, and on that final day it is estimated that a further 11,000 people died. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the enormity of the numbers, but every life that was lost was precious in the eyes of their creator God.

In the face of the great suffering that exists in our world, the profound Christian truth is that God not only understands and sees our pain and trauma; in Jesus Christ we worship a God who suffered and died with us and for us, and by his scars our own are healed.

Edward Shillito, a Free Church Minister during World War 1 wrote,

*'If we have never sought, we seek Thee now;
Thine eyes burn through the dark, our only stars;
We must have sight of thorn-pricks on Thy brow,
We must have Thee, O Jesus of the Scars.
The heavens frighten us; they are too calm;
In all the universe we have no place.*

Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm?
Lord Jesus, by Thy Scars, we claim Thy grace.
If, when the doors are shut, Thou drawest near,
Only reveal those hands, that side of Thine;
We know to-day what wounds are, have no fear,
Show us Thy Scars, we know the countersign.
The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.' *

*Edward Shillito (1872-1948), a Free Church minister in England during World War I

God is not distant or detached from the pain and suffering that people experience. Jesus has compassion on those who suffer (Matt 9:35) and He suffers with them. In fact, that is what the word 'com-passion' literally means: 'with-suffering'.

As I reflect on the suffering of people caught up in wars and conflicts around the world today, and as I consider the day-to-day suffering of people around me too, I also pause to remember the passion and the compassion of Jesus Christ.

Ask

Thank you, God, that You are not a stranger to my pain, nor the pain of the world.
Jesus, I receive once again the healing that You bought for me on the cross.

Pause and pray

Joining with others all over the world, I take a minute's silence now to remember those who lost their lives during World War One.

Pause and pray

So much of the world is suffering right now. What wars and current conflicts am I aware of?
Heavenly Father, as I name these places before You now, I ask You to bring healing to the nations.

Pause and pray

Yield

Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' John 14:27

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, Prince of Peace, I yield to Your incomparably great love. As I open myself to being loved by You once again today, may Your love and your peace flow through me to others... especially upon those who are suffering, whether I know it or not.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the eternal, enduring promise that You, God, so loved the world and everything in it that You sacrificed everything – Your Son, Jesus Christ – so that all may know love. (John 3:16)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 12 2020 (click for audio)

Do Not Fear

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's reassuring power, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 93:

*The floods have risen up, O Lord.
The floods have roared like thunder;
the floods have lifted their pounding waves.
But mightier than the violent raging of the seas,
mightier than the breakers on the shore—
the Lord above is mightier than these!*

Psalm 93:3-4

Pause and pray

Over the last couple of days, the writer of Psalm 91 has invited me to receive God's welcome, to trust God and to make my home in the shelter of God's wings where I find protection. Today as I reflect on the next part of this Psalm I take hold of its promises.

*You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.*

Psalm 91:5-7

Fear is a cruel enemy. Fear often holds me back from taking steps of faith. It spoils my relationships, stopping me from giving and receiving love. It drains me of peace and fills me with dread. It reduces me, forcing me to become less than I am, less than who God has made me to be.

It's not surprising, therefore, that God repeatedly tells His people to not be afraid. In fact, it's the most common command in the whole of Scripture, repeated around 365 times, once for every single day of the year. 'Do not be afraid,' says the Lord, 'for I am with you.' (Joshua 1:9)

Ask

As I reflect on the ‘fear’ phrases in today’s passage, how do they make me feel? What is the ‘terror of night’ for me? What are the ‘arrows that fly by day’? I offer these feelings and fears to You, God.

Pause and pray

Who among my family and friends is plagued by fear in some way? As I pray for them now, I speak the Lord’s command and promise to Joshua over each their lives - ‘Do not be afraid, for [the Lord is] with you!’ (Joshua 1:9)

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.*

Psalm 91:5-7

Trying to be (or at least appear to be) brave and courageous isn’t the way to overcome fear. Instead fear needs to be displaced and replaced.

I imagine a jug filled to the brim with water, and then a large stone being dropped into the jug. The water spills out – it is displaced and replaced by the stone.

In the same way, the writer of Psalm 91 invites me to receive God’s welcome, to trust God and to make my home in the shelter of God’s wings, where all fear will be displaced and replaced by divine love.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, as well as all the big stuff, I choose to yield to You all of the little fears and insecurities that I’ve somehow become comfortable with and held on to. I abandon myself instead to Your love, to the love of others, even to loving myself.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the promise found in John’s first letter, that ‘there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.’ (1 John 4:18)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 13 2020 (click for audio)

Make Yourself at Home

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's unshakable presence, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*Come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him*
Psalm 95:1-2

Pause and pray

Today, I am continuing to reflect on what Psalm 91 has to teach me about the hospitality of God. I want to learn more about extending and expressing hospitality towards others, but I need to learn more about how to receive God's welcome first.

*If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*
Psalm 91:9-13

When I'm visiting friends and they say, 'Make yourself at home!', what does that mean? Is it OK to flop onto the sofa and put my feet up? Do they mean that I can raid the kitchen and make myself some lunch? Do I pop my toothbrush in the cup beside the sink and choose a bed to sleep in? Do they want me to find a cupboard to unpack my bag into?

I wonder what my friends would say if I truly 'made myself at home'?

I love that this Psalm invites me to 'make the Most High [my] dwelling'. However, I wonder if I behave like I'm 'just visiting' God a couple of times a week, rather than making God my forever, all-the-time home? Have I fully unpacked my bags yet?

Ask

What would it mean for me to make God my forever, all-the-time home, to live freely and fully in God?

Pause and pray

As I think about my family and friends, my neighbors and others in my local community, who has yet to discover their home in God?

I ask You, God of welcome, to reach out to them, and I call out to them in faith, 'Come home!'

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.*

Psalm 91:9-13

Angels appear throughout scripture, often as messengers, the bringers and singers of good news. In this Psalm, the writer says that God will send His angels to guard me. Eugene Peterson paraphrases it like this, 'If you stumble, they'll catch you, their job is to keep you from falling.' (Psalm 91:11, MSG)

I don't know if I'll meet an angel today, nor if I'll realize it if I do, but I am grateful that God's messengers will be guarding me and keeping me from falling.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Hospitable Father, thank You for inviting me to make myself at home in You, wherever I am, and for all time. I still struggle to believe that you welcome me, and all the mess I bring with me, but I choose to say yes to You, once again. I surrender all of my insecurities to You and I accept Your acceptance of me.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the promise in this Psalm that when I make my home in God, when I 'make the Most High my dwelling, no harm will overtake [me], no disaster will come near [my] tent.'

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 14 2020 (click for audio)

I Will....

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in my Creator, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*For the Lord is a great God,
a great King above all gods.
He holds in his hands the depths of the earth
and the mightiest mountains.
The sea belongs to him, for he made it.
His hands formed the dry land, too.*
Psalm 95:3-5

Pause and pray

Today is the final day that I will be reflecting on Psalm 91. Having invited me to trust God and make my home in God, the writer summarizes this Psalm with a series of incredible promises from God.

*'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.'*

Psalm 91:14-16

These final verses of Psalm 91 read like a series of marriage vows, lifelong promises of belonging.

As I slowly read them through again, I imagine God standing in front of me, saying them to me.

I will rescue you...
I will protect you...
I will answer you...
I will be with you in trouble...
I will deliver you...
I will honor you...
I will satisfy you...
I will show you my salvation...

Ask

Which of these promises did I really need to hear God speaking to me today? I talk with God about it now.

Pause and pray

The Psalmist says that God 'will be with him in trouble'. I think of those who feel like they are in trouble today – those in financial difficulty because of the coronavirus crisis, school pupils and university students who are anxious about their courses, those who are sick at home or in hospital, and any others who come to mind.

I ask you God to fulfill your promise and be with them. Comfort them and meet their needs.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.'*

Psalm 91:14-16

Hospitality isn't just an open home, but an open heart. It's not just 'welcome to what I've got', but 'welcome to all of who I am'. The whole of Psalm 91 is an invitation to be with God. 'Dwell in the shelter of the Most High'. 'Rest in the shadow of the Almighty'. 'Take refuge under his wings'. 'Make the Most High your dwelling'. 'Be with me,' says God.

And these final verses describe God's extravagant, one-sided covenant with all of humanity, but also with me. God promises me everything. 'I will protect you'. 'I will be with you'. And what does God ask from me? Just that I love him and call on him.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I am overwhelmed by your extravagant love and kindness towards me. I could never come close to giving back to You even the tiniest fraction of what you've given to me. Nonetheless, I surrender all that I have, and all that I am to You once again. I will love You Lord, with all of my heart, my soul, my mind and my strength. I will... I will... I will.

Yielding Promise

Today, I am grateful that all of the promises of God, including the ones that I have reflected on today, are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. 'For no matter how many promises God has made,' writes the Apostle

Paul, “they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.’ (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.

November 15 2020 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

On this special Sabbath, we are marking the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Although many nations around the world have commemorated this on the 1st of November, we are joining with other organizations across the UK today to focus our minds and prayers on those all over the world who face persecution because of their faith in Jesus.

John Mark Comer describes Sabbath as a day ‘to celebrate our weakness, our mortality, our limits. To celebrate our God of strength, and immortality and limitless power. To rest with him and to rest in him’*

*John Mark Comer, Garden Cit (Kindle edition) p197-8

And so today, God, as I prepare to pray for brothers and sisters around the world who are facing huge challenges, I begin by resting in Your strength and power. I am weak, Lord, but You are strong.

Pause and pray

The International Society for Human Rights estimates that Christians are believed to be targets of around 80% of all acts of religious discrimination or persecution, with Open Doors estimating that 260 million Christians have faced, or will face, persecution for their faith in 2020**

**<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2020-0019/#:~:text=The%20non%20Governmental%20organisation%2C%20Open,to%20245%20million%20in%202019>.

I use the words of Psalm 31 as prayer of protection for brothers and sisters who are facing challenges for their faith in You, Lord, today:

*How great is the goodness
you have stored up for those who fear you.
You lavish it on those who come to you for protection,
blessing them before the watching world.
You hide them in the shelter of your presence,
safe from those who conspire against them.
You shelter them in your presence,
far from accusing tongues.*
Psalm 31:19-20

Churches across the world have been unable to meet because of the Coronavirus crisis. But in addition to this, many communities are still facing persecution and arrest. In China, for example, the charity CSW reports that in one city, Christians were ‘forcibly dragged out and beaten on the ground’ and six members of the community were arrested.***

***<https://www.csv.org.uk/2020/09/21/report/4811/article.htm>

And so today, I pray for Christians all over the world who are imprisoned, hiding, or living in fear:

Abba Father, You are the defender of the helpless, and comforter of the fearful. I ask that You will draw near to Your children who are facing challenges and trials, simply for loving You. Be their rock of

protection when they need help; bring Your comforting peace when they are scared. Hide them in the shelter of Your presence today, safe from those who conspire against them (Ps 31:20)

Pause and Pray

I pray for organizations all over the world who are investing their time, energy and resources into supporting the Persecuted Church.

I praise You, Father, for their devotion and dedication to care for others and I ask for Your provision and protection over all that they do. Empower these movements and organizations to bring transformation to the lives of those who are facing challenges, and bring breakthrough into difficult circumstances today.

I take a moment to pause and pray for the work of any organizations or individuals I know by name that are serving persecuted Christians.

Pause and pray

The Bible reveals to me a God who understands human suffering; who became human, suffered and died for me (1 Peter 3:18). And for many persecuted Christians, the reality of Jesus's sacrifice brings comfort and hope.

Earlier this year, while members of his Church in China were enduring persecution, Brother Zhou wrote:

'Jesus was interrogated, convicted, whipped, teased, spurned and mocked, and finally crucified, died and was buried...If it were not for believing in God, we would not have joy, peace, patience, and hope even in all kinds of humiliation, intimidation, and suffering' Brother Zhou (not his real name)****

****<https://www.csw.org.uk/2020/07/20/feature/4724/article.htm>

How can this quote inspire and encourage me today? My circumstances may be completely different to Brother Zhou's, but where do I need God's joy, peace, patience and hope today?

And so, I recommit myself to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the coming week:

Spirit of the Sovereign Lord, anoint me again this week to proclaim good news to the poor. Send me out again this week to bind up the brokenhearted. Help me again this week to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. Amen.

Sabbath Blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.*****

*****Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

November 16 2020 (click for audio)

God's World

Within these poems of praise and lament we are exploring how we love God through prayer and creativity, love others through justice and hospitality, and love the world through mission and learning. This week, we reflect on Ancient Songs of learning.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's steadfast love, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 89:

*I will sing of the Lord's unfailing love forever!
Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.
Your unfailing love will last forever.
Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.*

Psalm 89:1-2

Pause and pray

Today I reflect on a Psalm written by David, one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history. In a few sentences he introduces me to one of the world's oldest, most magnificent teachers – creation itself – an expert in communicating the greatness of God...

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world...*

Psalm 19:1-4

This world can take my breath away. The vastness of the Sahara Desert, the majesty of the Swiss Alps, the wonder of a shooting star, the delicacy of a dragonfly; all reflect the imagination and attention to detail of the Person who made them.

David, a retired shepherd who'd spent many days and nights outdoors, sings about creation declaring God's glory, power and knowledge. The breathtaking beauty of this world draws David (and me) toward a fresh awareness of the God who numbers every grain of sand, and sustains every burning star.

Ask

Have I ever thought of creation as my teacher? What does the night sky, the landscape and the ecosystem where I live declare about God's glory?

Holy Spirit, I ask You to inspire me to wonder and expand my understanding.

Pause and pray

God commissioned humanity to care for His creation (Genesis 1). Yet, our activity is the main cause of what's been described as a climate crisis around the world. Rising global temperatures are leading to increased flooding and wildfires, and the destruction of habitats is leading to the extinction of many species.*

*Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

Lord, as a caretaker of Your creation, I ask You to influence national leaders, business leaders, religious leaders and me. Lead us to repentance and inspire us with effective solutions to care for Your earth.

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world...*

Psalm 19:1-4

The voice of creation 'goes out into all the earth', and through it everyone can learn something about the Creator.

In Matthew 28 the disciples are sent by Jesus to join with the voice of creation; to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (v19). Centuries later, I am included in that commission too. How will I join with the solar system in revealing the greatness of God to others today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, help me become a student of creation. I confess I often ignore and I sometimes even exploit the world You've given me. I repent of my self-interest and I take up the commission of a student and caretaker to proclaim Your works and reveal Your knowledge to others today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.' (Proverbs 30:5)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 17 2020 (click for audio)

Hero of Prayer and Worship

on Feast Days we pause from praying the Bible to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of John Wimber, a hero of Prayer and Worship.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

As I draw near to You God, would You draw near to me? Teach me to pray. Speak Lord, Your servant is listening.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today, stirring myself to worship, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 9:

*I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.
I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.*
Psalm 9:1-2

Pause and pray

It's impossible to summarize in a 10-minute devotional the extraordinary achievements and legacy of John Wimber.

There was his professional music career, which began when he was 15 years old. He co-founded, performed with and managed the Righteous Brothers, who were inducted into the rock and roll hall of fame.

There was also his extraordinary gift of evangelism. After his conversion in 1963, John led hundreds to Christ. By 1970, he was leading 11 Bible studies a week, for over 500 people.

He taught a legendary class at Fuller Theological Seminary, where people learned about miracles in the Scriptures and then immediately put their learning into practice; often with astonishing effect!

John helped found the Vineyard movement, an extraordinary global family of churches that hold together evangelical theology and a full-on experience of the Holy Spirit. Today, the Vineyard Movement has over 2000 churches, and continues to grow through the same church planting impulse that ran through John's veins.

Despite all these achievements, John Wimber would say, 'I am spare change in His pocket. He can spend me any way He wants.'

One of the greatest gifts John and the Vineyard movement have given to the global Church is their passion for worship.

In his book, *Equipping the Saints*, John Wimber once wrote, 'we realized that often we would sing about worship yet we never actually worshiped – except when we accidentally stumbled onto intimate songs like "I love you Lord", and "I lift my voice". Thus we began to see a difference between songs about Jesus and songs to Jesus.*

*John Wimber (c) Equipping the Saints, Vol. 1, No. 1

The songs that came out of the Vineyard movement were simple. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of music could easily play them at home. They were contemplative, they would repeat choruses over and over, to take the heart as well as the mind on a journey. And they were intimate, often directed to Jesus, rather than merely about Him.

Ask

When I worship with words or music, do I mostly sing about Jesus, or to Jesus? When I praise am I choosing to engage with what I'm singing or praying, or am I just going through the motions?

I pause to praise Jesus now, in my own words, or if I'm feeling brave and inspired, in song.

Pause and pray

God, as You raised up a global wave of worship through the Vineyard movement, would You do it again? Worshipers from every tongue and tribe and nation.

I name the churches in my community and ask You to start with us.

Pause and pray

Yield

In *Equipping the Saints*, John Wimber also wrote, 'We should always come to worship prepared for an audience with the King. And we should expect the Spirit of God to work among us. He moves in different ways- sometimes for salvation, sometimes for deliverances, sometimes for sanctification or healings. God also visits us through the prophetic gifts.'**

**John Wimber (c) Equipping the Saints, Vol. 1, No. 1

For John, worship was up close and personal. God is present. And as He inhabits the praise of His people, all heaven can break out – with signs, wonders and miracles of all kinds.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I yield myself to you with the words of John Wimber's *Praise Song****:

'Son of God this is our love song
Jesus my Lord I sing to You
Come now Spirit of God
Breathe life into these words of love
Angels join from above
As we sing our love song'

***John Wimber ©1981 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing (ASCAP). All Rights Reserved.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, ‘...hope does not put [me] to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into [my] heart through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to [me].’ (Romans 5:5)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 18 2020 (click for audio)

God's Word

the Ancient Songs of Israel that became Jesus' prayer book and mine.

Each day we will **P.R.A.Y.**: **P**: Pause and be still, **R**: Rejoice with the Psalmists and Reflect on their words, **A**: Ask God to help us and others and **Y**: Yield to God's will in our lives and in our world.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the incomparable presence of God, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 89:

*All heaven will praise your great wonders, Lord;
myriads of angels will praise you for your faithfulness.
For who in all of heaven can compare with the Lord?
What mightiest angel is anything like the Lord?
The highest angelic powers stand in awe of God.
He is far more awesome than all who surround his throne.*
Psalm 89:5-7

Pause and pray

On Monday I reflected on how the opening lines of Psalm 19 encouraged me to learn from God's world. Today, as I return to the same Psalm, I listen for what I can learn from God's word...

*The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring for ever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.*
Psalm 19:7-9

David, the author of this Psalm, describes God's perfect law as trustworthy, right, radiant and firm; and if I learn from it, then I'll be refreshed, wise, joyful and illuminated.

God's word doesn't just inform my mind and direct my decisions; if I let it deepen from head knowledge to soul experience, God's word can shift my perspective and renew my very being.

Ask

I'm struck by David's delight and confidence in God's word. There are many passages and stories in the Bible I delight in, but If I'm honest, there are some parts I find difficult too.

Is there something that I am confused about; is there a passage, story or theme I find particularly challenging to understand at present?

Lord, I bring my questions to You. Expand my understanding and help me move from head knowledge, to deep trust and delight.

Pause and pray

There are so many people I learn from. I name some of them now: friends, preachers, pod casters and authors. I'm grateful for them all.

God, I ask You to increase their wisdom and their ability to communicate about Your Word.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

*The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring for ever.*

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.*

Psalm 19:7-9

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus the Rabbi invites me to 'take [His] yoke upon [me] and learn from [Him], for [He is] gentle and humble in heart, and', if I do, '[I] will find rest for [my] soul.' (Matthew 11:29)

A Rabbi's yoke is his interpretation of how to live out the perfect law David is describing. Jesus is inviting me to a lifetime of learning with Him that won't weigh me down with impossible expectations, but refresh and transform me from the inside out.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Rabbi Jesus, the Word made flesh, I yield to You. Teach me Your yoke, show me how You live out God's best. I will follow Your lead.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me invites me, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.*

*Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.*

*Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.*

Amen.

November 19 2020 (click for audio)

God's Work

the Ancient Songs of Israel that became Jesus' prayer book and mine.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's rule and reign, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 89:

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.
Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.
Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship,
for they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord.*

Psalm 89:14-15

Pause and pray

So far this week I have reflected on what I can learn from God's world and God's word. Today, as I read the final section of Psalm 19, I reflect on God's work in me...

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.
They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.
By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.*

Psalm 19:9b-13

'Who can discern their own errors?' How can anyone see their own blind spots or recognize their own shadow side? I've often found God's word to be like a mirror. As I read the Bible, particularly the life and words of Jesus, my thoughts, actions and inaction come into sharp focus. With the Holy Spirit bringing the Bible to life, I am 'warned'.

Ask

I deliberately turn this Psalm into a prayer. God, *I invite You to shine a light and bring into sharp focus my 'hidden faults' and 'willful sins'. Increase my self awareness so that I can say sorry and learn to live differently.*

Pause and pray

God, I pray for my church community. Help us hunger for holiness. Show us our hidden faults, thoughts and failures. Would we be quick to say sorry, even quicker to forgive others and led always by love.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.
They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.
By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
Psalm 19:9b-13*

I remember, as a young girl, my Mum giving me teaspoons of honey. As the sweetness burst over my tongue I took my time, savoring the treat, trying to make it last as long as possible.

David says that God's word is sweeter than honey. I choose one verse, from this Psalm. Today, I will take my time and savor its sweetness again and again throughout my day.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I make the final words of Psalm 19 my prayer of yielding for today... 'May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.'
(Psalm 19: 14)

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'What [I] have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that [I] may understand what God has freely given [me].' (1 Corinthians 2:12)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 20 2020 (click for audio)

Hidden or Neglected

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's eternal nature, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 90:

*Lord, through all the generations
you have been our home!
Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end, you are God.
Psalm 90:1-2*

Pause and pray

Today I reflect on part of the longest chapter in the Bible; Psalm 119, a poem celebrating the goodness of God's word.

*How can a young person stay on the path of purity?
By living according to your word.
I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.
I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.
Praise be to you, Lord;
teach me your decrees.
With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.
I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.
Psalm 119:9-16*

This ancient song was written to be memorized; each of its 22 sections correspond with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In a time when people didn't have a personal copy of the scriptures, it was common to commit large portions to memory.

My household has 17 Bibles - I counted! That's not including commentaries, the Bible app on my phone or the kids' story books. With so many copies to hand I definitely take my access to God's word for granted. I can recite maybe a few dozen verses or sections from memory.

How many more would I work to memorize if I had to hide God's word in my heart because it wasn't so freely available?

Ask

God, I am challenged to not 'neglect Your word'. I take a practical step and choose one verse from today's passage; help me memorize it now and hide it in my heart. I ask You to bring this word alive to me.

Pause and pray

There are nations where it can be dangerous to possess one Bible, let alone 17. I am challenged by stories from the Iranian Church of whole families sharing one New Testament, of people starting their journey towards Jesus by reading scripture and of imprisoned Christians writing memorized verses on prison walls.*

*Learn more about the Iranian Church: <https://www.elam.com>

God, I ask that Your word would continue to get into nations like Iran. Help churches and organizations distributing the Bible in dangerous contexts to get Your word into the hands of those seeking You.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

I seek you with all my heart;

do not let me stray from your commands.

I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you.

Praise be to you, Lord;

teach me your decrees.

With my lips I recount

all the laws that come from your mouth.

I rejoice in following your statutes

as one rejoices in great riches.

I meditate on your precepts

and consider your ways.

I delight in your decrees;

I will not neglect your word.

Psalm 119:9-16

In the Gospels, the group of people Jesus criticized most were the religious experts, and they were able to quote great swathes of scripture. Even the Devil himself can recite God's word when it suits him (Matthew 4:1-11)! Memorizing alone does not help me delight in God's decrees or live according

to His word. To unleash the transformative power of God's word, I need to invite the Spirit of Truth to bring it to life in me. (John 14:17)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I confess that I take Your word for granted. Spirit of Truth, bring my learning, meditation and memorization of God's word to full, technicolor life. 'I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.' (Psalm 119:10)

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace.' (Isaiah 54:13)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 21 2020 (click for audio)

Sing

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's protection, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 91:

*Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

This I declare about the Lord:

*He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.*

Psalm 91:1-2

Pause and pray

Today I return to Psalm 119, a masterpiece written to be memorized.

Holy Spirit, as I reflect, help me to join in with the writers' celebration of God and His word...

Your word, Lord, is eternal;

it stands firm in the heavens.

*Your faithfulness continues through all generations;
you established the earth, and it endures.*

*Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.*

*If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.*

*I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.*

Psalm 119:89-93

During lock down this year, I really missed gathering and singing with my church. In this season, the Psalms became my primary place of praise, and lament. The experiences and learning of these ancient song-writers express honesty, wonder and wisdom that sets my heart alight in God's presence. As I read them aloud, their words become my own. 'Your word is eternal... Your faithfulness continues... Your laws endure... I will never forget...'

Ask

The Psalms captured and shaped the worship and learning of Israel. What Psalms or songs give voice to my worship at present? What are they teaching me?

God, I put into my own words what I'm learning and loving about You today.

Pause and pray

Today I pray for songwriters who are giving voice to the experience and learning of Christian communities. I particularly name those I know locally, as well those who bless the Church globally. *God, help them, 'sing to [You] a new song' (Psalm 96:1) that will shape the learning and wonder of others.*

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*What you say goes, God,
and stays, as permanent as the heavens.
Your truth never goes out of fashion;
it's as up-to-date as the earth when the sun comes up.
Your Word and truth are dependable as ever;
that's what you ordered—you set the earth going.
If your revelation hadn't delighted me so,
I would have given up when the hard times came.
But I'll never forget the advice you gave me;
you saved my life with those wise words.
Save me! I'm all yours.
Psalm 119:89-93 (MSG)*

God's Word and truth prepared the writer of this passage to endure pain and challenge. Without it, the Psalmist says, 'I would have given up when the hard times came.'

Am I immersing myself in God's Word and truth, stretching my understanding and learning more of God's love and character so that I will have strength to keep going through hard times?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I confess that sometimes I only go looking for Your wisdom when I'm in trouble. Help me dive into Your eternal, life giving, truth-filled word to find delight and strength everyday.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that as, 'I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.'
(Psalm 16:8)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 22 2020 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Learning

I've been thinking this week about the practice of learning. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask God to renew in me a tender, teachable heart.

Pause and pray

*I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you...
Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.
I am a stranger on earth;
Do not hide your commands from me.
My soul is consumed with longing
For your laws at all times...
Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.*

Psalm 119:11,18–20,24 (NIV)

Pause and pray

In his book about the Sabbath, Wayne Muller says: 'Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight.*

* Wayne Muller, *Sabbath*, p1

Holy Spirit, help me to rest today, and as I do so, give me wisdom. I welcome Your presence and revelation within my life. Converse with my spirit so that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart may be acceptable in Your sight today.

Pause and pray

I pray for the preaching of God's Word around the world today:

Father, I thank You that millions of people will learn from the Bible today. Please speak powerfully to convict, to comfort and to conform our minds to Yours.

Jesus, I pray today for all the children learning about You. Thank You that You always love to put them first. Help me to be more trusting, humble and playful like them.

Holy Spirit, revive us. Inspire politicians and educators, artists and journalists, economists and scientists at church today, with the kinds of ideas that can change the world for good.

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers in my own local community, naming someone I know who is either a student, an educator or a parent as they disciple their own children.

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

*May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.***

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

November 23 2020 (click for audio)

King of Justice

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the joy I find in God, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 92:

*You thrill me, Lord, with all you have done for me!
I sing for joy because of what you have done.
O Lord, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts.
Psalm 92:4-5*

Pause and pray

Today is something a little bit different than our regular Lectio 365. I will be doing an adaptation of one of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. The Ignatian exercises are simple activities designed to help us know and love God more, and to join Him on mission.

Ignatius encourages me to imagine an earthly leader, and then imagine Christ the King. While picturing these leaders in my mind, I am invited to pay attention to the internal movements of my heart..

To begin, I reflect on this description of God's kingship as described in the book of Psalms.

*Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.
Psalm 89:13-14*

Who is a leader that I most respect, that most inspires me? It might be a politician or an industry leader or an author or a mentor who has impacted my life. It could even be the captain of my favorite football team! In the quiet, I picture this leader in my mind's eye.

What are her or his priorities?

What are they establishing in their circle of influence?

How are they inviting me to follow them, join them on their mission?

Ask

How did my heart respond when I pictured this earthly leader?

How did I feel?

Was I excited? Motivated to follow?

Pause and pray

Now I picture Jesus in my mind's eye - the King of the universe – the ruler of all the nations, whose throne is built on justice and righteousness. The King of love and faithfulness. The King who makes wrong things right.

I imagine him inviting me to follow, to join Him in His ever increasing reign of justice, peace and love on the earth.

Pause and pray**Yield**

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.*

Psalm 89:13-14

As I picture God on His throne of justice and righteousness and as I hear His invitation for me to join Him, how does my heart respond?

Do I feel nervous? Do I feel resistant?

Do I feel excited? Do I desire to do something great with and for God?

In the quiet I talk to God about these feelings.

Pause and pray**Yielding Prayer**

God of righteousness, God of justice. God of love. God of faithfulness. I hear your invitation. I yield myself to you and I join You on Your mission to bring forth the kingdom, the reign of God on the earth.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, ‘...I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ (Jeremiah 29:11)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 24 2020 (click for audio)

Joyful Justice

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's rule and reign, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 93:

*The Lord is king! He is robed in majesty.
Indeed, the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength.
The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
Your throne, O Lord, has stood from time immemorial.
You yourself are from the everlasting past.
Psalm 93:1-2*

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on justice in the book of Psalms. Today's Psalm is describing a wedding and the writer is celebrating the strength and beauty of the king on this day of happiness.

*Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.
Psalm 45:6-7*

Justice....and joy? To be honest, those are not words that I often put together. Mostly when I think about justice I think about injustice – the hurting, the desolation, the victims and perpetrators.

And yet I see in this passage that the God of justice is characterized by joy. In fact, the New King James version of these verses says that the God of justice is 'anointed with the oil of gladness MORE than all your companions.' As God practices justice, He does it with more joy than all of us!

Ask

God I confess that as I practice justice, that often it's frustrated justice, exasperated justice, sometimes even depressed and despairing justice. In this time of quiet, I give you all those responses and emotions. I ask that you exchange them for your joy.

Pause and pray

God I pray for justice activists on front lines everywhere. Those in back alleys, exposing human trafficking. Those combating systemic racial injustice. Those fighting economic injustice in lofty office

towers. Those in the UN battling for climate change. I name justice activists I know personally before you now. Anoint them with the oil of joy, I pray.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.*
Psalm 45:6-7

In Hebrews 1:8-9 the writer uses this Psalm to describe Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross. Jesus faces suffering full on, wades into the fray with us. In the midst of what feels like impenetrable darkness, Jesus knows that morning is coming.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I yield my bruised and battered heart to You – the darkness of my understanding in the face of suffering and injustice. I welcome Your joy today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.' (Psalm 18:28-29)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 25 2020 (click for audio)

Loving Justice

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's peace, even in the midst of violent storms, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 93:

*The floods have risen up, O Lord.
The floods have roared like thunder;
the floods have lifted their pounding waves.
But mightier than the violent raging of the seas,
mightier than the breakers on the shore—
the Lord above is mightier than these!"*
Psalm 93:3-4

Pause and pray

As I continue to explore justice in the book of Psalms, I come to another description of God on His throne – the place where God sits as a judge over the nations. From there He watches and works...

*The Lord is in his holy temple;
the Lord is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them...
For the Lord is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.*
Psalm 11:4&7

Am I primarily a hater of injustice, or am I also a lover of justice? Do I love justice as an expression of God's person and purposes? Do I look for justice, and do I rejoice when I see it?

Ask

God, I ask that You would help me focus on the light instead of the darkness, the beauty coming out of ashes, the joy emerging from the place of mourning.

In the quiet, I reflect on where I see justice coming forth, and I give thanks.

Pause and pray

God I pray for those who are working injustice into this world. Would You change their minds and their hearts. Let injustice begin to taste bitter in their mouth and let justice, equity and love begin to taste sweet. I think of those I know who are perpetrators of injustice and I pray for them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The Lord is in his holy temple;
the Lord is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them...
For the Lord is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.*
Psalm 11:4&7

Justice activist John Perkins says this: 'God has always wanted the vulnerable in society to be cared for. He never intended for them to languish in poverty, abuse, slavery, homelessness, or other types of devastation. When we care for individuals who are trapped in these ways, when we show them love and help them move toward freedom and wholeness, we participate in bringing a little part of God's Kingdom back into alignment with His greater plan. We do justice and God smiles.'*

*John M. Perkins, *Dream with Me: Race, Love, and the Struggle We Must Win*

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus I want to love justice the way that You do. I want to do justice and see Your smile. I yield my heart and my mind to You today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.'
(Psalms 16:8)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 26 2020 (click for audio)

Decree Justice

This week we are exploring the theme of justice in the book of Psalms; reflecting on what we can learn from these Ancient Songs.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today, stirring myself to praise, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*Come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him.
Psalm 95:1-2*

Pause and pray

So far in the book of Psalms I see a God who rules from a throne of righteousness and justice. Who is joyful, who loves justice. What else will the Psalms reveal?

*Arise, Lord, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
Let the assembled peoples gather round you,
while you sit enthroned over them on high.
Let the Lord judge the peoples.
Psalm 7:6-8a*

There are so many challenges and injustices on the earth. In the midst of these, the psalmist is confident that God is just. That He is the ultimate authority - enthroned above all the people – and that His word is law. 'Awake!' cries the psalmist, 'And decree justice!'

I would like the confidence of the psalmist!

Ask

God, in the quiet now, I take a few moments and try and picture You on the throne. High above our elected officials. High above the CEOs of multinational corporations. High above any other power at work in the world. I worship You.

Pause and pray

God I pray for our elected and appointed officials. For queens and kings, prime ministers and presidents. For justices in the courts of our countries. May they decree justice and bring just laws to protect the vulnerable and bring greater peace, equity, and flourishing to my nation. In the quiet I hold my leaders before you – use them to decree justice.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*Arise, Lord, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
Let the assembled peoples gather round you,
while you sit enthroned over them on high.
Let the Lord judge the peoples.*

Psalm 7:6-8a

I know that sometimes I'm tempted to sit enthroned as judge over people, systems and situations. Sometimes I'm quick to judge others in my heart and with my words. I want to be judge, jury, and jailer! Is there a way I can decree justice, to speak truth to power, to judge a situation rightly, but without being judgmental?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God I give You my heart, so hasty to assess and to judge. I give You my mouth, so quick to condemn. I need wisdom and discernment. I need to see clearly but yet with a pure heart so that I can do justice the way you do. Help me today, O God.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me that, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.' (James 1:5)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 27 2020 (click for audio)

Secure Justice

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the awesomeness of God, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*For the Lord is a great God,
a great King above all gods.
He holds in his hands the depths of the earth
and the mightiest mountains.
The sea belongs to him, for he made it.
His hands formed the dry land, too.
Psalm 95:3-5*

Pause and pray

This week I continue to explore justice in the book of Psalms. I've seen God enthroned as King and Judge over the nations. He loves justice. He decrees justice. And in this passage, He maintains justice...

*I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.
Surely the righteous will praise your name,
and the upright will live in your presence.
Psalm 140:12-13*

Justice can be fleeting. As politicians come in and out of office, their pet projects come and go with them. I've seen friends put back on their feet by government programs, only to have it all taken away when the next elected official comes to power. It's demoralizing, dehumanizing, and discouraging. Where can we get our sense of security; of stability?

Ask

Where am I putting my trust only in government policies and programs? *God I repent where I have not taken my place in fighting for the needy. In the time of quiet I ask you to show me what it is you want me to do.*

Pause and pray

Where have we as a church neglected our biblical mandate to care for the poor, the aliens and strangers, the widows and orphans?

Help us to open our hearts and share our connections and resources with those who don't enjoy the same privilege that we do. I pray for all the work that is already being done by churches in my town or city to bring the good news to the poor. I name those projects before you now.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.*

*Surely the righteous will praise your name,
and the upright will live in your presence.*

Psalm 140:12-13

The psalmist says that the Lord not only decrees justice for the poor – he secures it. God is my security, and ultimately the security of those who I seek to serve.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God I put my trust in you. May I invite others into that same security.

Yielding Promise

In Psalm 16:5-6 the psalmist says, 'Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.'

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.*

*Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.*

*Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.*

Amen.

November 28 2020 (click for audio)

Work Justice

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, stir my heart and teach me how, 'To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with...' You today. (Micah 6:8)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's attentive care, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*Come, let us worship and bow down.
Let us kneel before the Lord our maker,
for he is our God.
We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.
If only you would listen to his voice today!
Psalm 95:6-7*

Pause and pray

I've been on a journey this week exploring the theme of justice in the book of Psalms. I've seen that God loves justice. He decrees justice. He secures justice. And in Psalm 103 I see that He also works justice.

*The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed...
The Lord has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
Psalm 103:6&19*

God is watching. God is speaking. And God is acting. The psalmist says that the Lord works justice. How does he do that?

Through me.

Theresa of Avila famously said, 'Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.'

Ask

God, I know I can't address every injustice. But I can do something. What does justice look like in my

day to day life? What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to start doing? God would you speak to me now.

Pause and pray

God I pray for those in my town or in my city who are oppressed, who are victims of injustice. Those who are falling through the cracks of the system; who are crying out thinking that no one hears them. Joyful God, You who love justice, would You decree and secure justice for them. And would You work justice – perhaps even through me.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

*The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed...
The Lord has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
Psalm 103:6&19*

God is just. He is righteous. And He invites me and He empowers me by His Spirit to become more like Him.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I give you my body. I give you my hands. I give you my feet. I give you my eyes. Give me Your compassion. Help me pray and work for the day when justice will flow like a mighty river and righteousness like a never failing stream. (Amos 5:24)

Yielding Promise

I thank You Father that your word promises that when I turn my anxieties and worries into thankful prayer, that, ‘the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [my] heart and [my] mind in Christ Jesus.’ (Phil 4:6-7)

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

November 29 2020 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

Together, as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas, we will be reflecting on the Messianic prophecies that pointed to the hope to come, and the songs of joy around Jesus' birth.

It's great that Advent begins on a Sunday, because of course, a Sunday for Christians is traditionally our Sabbath day of rest. But let's be honest: December is a few days away and can be a pretty stressful month. It can fly by in a blur of tinsel and turkey. Let's embrace this Sabbath start as an opportunity to change pace this Advent.

And so, let's prepare our hearts for Christ's coming.

One of the earliest recorded prayers of the Church is the Aramaic word *Maranatha*, which literally means, 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Revelation 22:20). The Latin word *adventus* means the same thing: 'come'.

Advent is a season of waiting and wanting, looking and longing, inviting Christ to come once more into our lives and into our world. So, I pause now and repeat this ancient prayer several times slowly:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

Turning my attention now to focus on my own heart, I may become aware of sinful thoughts, words or deeds in my life, and I simply acknowledge them now before You, Lord, and I pray for my own life:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

And now I turn my thoughts to think of someone who needs Christ's love today. I name them before You and pray for them:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

Next, I think about my own local church family and the many activities we have planned in this Christmas season, whether they are in person or online, and I pray, again for us:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

Finally, I think of a place in the world right now that desperately needs Your comfort, and I pray for that place, that situation, those people:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

Way back in the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux, who was the founder of the Cistercian order of monks, said that Christ comes to us in three different ways: firstly, in Bethlehem at Christmas; secondly, at the end of the age; and thirdly, in the lives of believers every single day. So, let's pray for all three of Christ's comings this Advent:

Thank You, Father, for loving us so much that You sent Your Son to save us.

Maranatha. May Jesus be born again amongst us this Christmas.

Thank You, Jesus, that You came before and You are coming again in glory.

Maranatha. We long for You to return and make all things new.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for filling my life.

Maranatha. May the Lord Jesus Christ be born again in me today.

A Sabbath Blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May my peace and perspective be renewed in the busyness of this season.

May my hand be free enough from spending and acquiring to receive Your gift.

May a little of the wonder and magic of Christmas awaken the child within me today.

And may God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.

[November 30 2020 \(click for audio\)](#)

Hoping for Dawn

If you have been journeying with Lectio 365 for any length of time, you will know that we reflect on six practices that help us express our love for God, others and the world.

From today, for the season of Advent, we are pausing that rhythm to pray, '**O Come Emmanuel!**'

Together we will reflect on Messianic prophecies written centuries before Jesus' birth and explore the anticipation of Jesus' arrival and the hope He brings.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Lord, in this busy season please help me to be still. I am opening my ears now to hear You, quietly preparing my heart for the wonder of Your coming at Christmas.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's justice today as I join in the ancient hope of all God's people in Psalm 10...

The Lord is king forever and ever!
The godless nations will vanish from the land.
Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless.
Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.
You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed,
so mere people can no longer terrify them.
Psalm 10:16 -18

Pause and pray

Christmas is just not going to be the same this year. It's a time of great uncertainty. Will I be able to gather with my family and friends or will I be locked down? Will the shops even be open? What about my job? It can feel like this disease is a violent oppressor and that we are surrounded with darkness and uncertainty. Perhaps not unlike the people of Israel in the time of Isaiah.

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;

they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.
Isaiah 9:1-3

The peoples of Zebulun and Naphtali had a history of being dominated by the Assyrians. They experienced war, occupation, hardship. It's not surprising that they were struggling, overwhelmed with gloom and distress.

Ask

Is my heart heavy? Do I feel distressed - pressed by financial insecurity, Covid-19 restrictions, unpleasant employers or other hardships? God, I take a few moments to unpack the darkness of my life before you and invite your light.

Pause and Pray

God, I pray for all of those coming into the Advent season under the shadow of darkness. For those who have lost their livelihoods. For families unable to gather due to travel restrictions. For the elderly in care homes, feeling lost and lonely. In the quiet, I name before you now those I know. Jesus, light of the world, would you shine on them.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage I listen out for any particular word or phrase that the Holy Spirit seems to be highlighting for me personally.

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

The people walking in darkness
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Isaiah 9:1-3

Darkness turns to light. Night turns to dawn. Joy increases. Whether all at once, like flipping a light switch in a darkened room, or slowly but surely as the dawn takes us from night to day. The presence of Jesus promises light, hope, and joy.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

It might feel like nighttime now, but as I enter into this season of Advent, I yield myself to hope and I pray this ancient song that originated in monasteries in the 8th or 9th century:

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel has come to thee oh Israel.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I rest in your promise that, 'The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;' Psalm 34:17-19

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.