

LECTIO 365 Day Prayers

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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In order to listen and read at the same time, you need to select the day page then right-click the date and set your screen for two separate windows

August 2021

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

[Month of August 2021](#)

By opening a PDF version from above along with the appropriate audio selection you should be able to read and listen at the same time with two different windows open.

[August 01 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 1st of August, and today we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about Shalom. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask for the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7, NIV UK)

Pause and pray

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"Lord, save me!"
The Lord is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return to your rest, my soul,
for the Lord has been good to you.
Psalm 116:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

In his book, 'Sabbath as Resistance', Walter Brueggemann says: 'I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses ... along with anxiety and violence... Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.'*

* Walter Brueggemann, Sabbath as Resistance

Pause

God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me the quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You, and I welcome Your presence and Your peace – Your Shalom - today.

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will have their 'feet fitted with readiness' to preach the gospel of peace (Ephesians 5:16 NIVUK). And I pray that those who listen will have open ears and hearts, so that many will be saved and made whole today.

Jesus, I pray especially for children and young people in church today who need You to be their Prince of Peace. Those who secretly feel alone. Those who are struggling with anxiety and fear. May Your peace be with them, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, breathe upon us today. Inspire parents and politicians, artists and journalists, health workers and bar workers in church today. Enable us all to bring peace to the places where we are, so that we 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 practicing peacemaking in simple ways in their home, their school or their workplace.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.
John 20:21-22

I receive the promise and the commissioning in these words, and I pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit.

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

August 02 2021 (click for audio)

God's Mission to Forgive

It's Monday the 2nd of August and today we are continuing our Lectio 365 series reflecting on the biblical theme of shalom – God's gift of peace, wholeness and completeness. This week we will be exploring shalom through the lens of 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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's great goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 86...

*...you, O Lord,
are a God of compassion and mercy,
slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
Psalm 86:15*

Pause and pray

Jesus is eating at the home of Simon the Pharisee. An uninvited woman with a bad reputation interrupts the meal by washing Jesus' feet with her tears and anointing Him with perfume. Simon criticizes his guest for not stopping the woman, but Jesus responds very differently...

Then [Jesus] turned towards the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.'

Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'

Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Luke 7:44-50

This is a story of contrasts...

A named man and an unnamed woman.

The religious elite and the notorious sinner.

A person who shames and shuns, judging one who weeps and worships.

But Simon the Pharisee and the unwelcome woman are more alike than they first appear.

'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). The Pharisee and the woman are both sinners. Simon, on one hand, is respectable, but he's unaware of his sin (or maybe he's just doing a better job of hiding it). On the other hand, the woman is highly aware of her sin, embarrassingly earnest in her repentance and overwhelmed with love for the man who gives her dignity, forgiveness and peace.

Ask

I'm more like Simon than I'd like to admit. I'm often ignorant of my sin. But today, I choose to adopt the posture of the kneeling woman. I imagine myself, at the feet of Jesus...

Holy Spirit, examine my desires and opinions, my thoughts and actions. Show me my sin; especially the sin I try to conceal.

Pause and pray

Now, uncomfortably conscious of my sin, I imagine lifting my gaze from Jesus' feet to His face. I see a smile spread across His face as He says, 'Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

What is my Response.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage I listen for a particular word or moment that the Holy Spirit is highlighting to me...

Then [Jesus] turned towards the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.'

Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'

Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Luke 7:44-50

This unnamed woman arrives in tears, defined by her shame. After a messy but redemptive encounter with Jesus, she is no longer defined by the things she's gotten wrong, but instead by how deeply she loves the one who forgave her.

'Go in peace' says Jesus. 'Your sins are forgiven. Shalom (peace) with God has been restored.'

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I do not deserve Your attention, Your favor or Your peace – but I am eternally grateful to receive it. I yield to Your mission of forgiveness and embrace the shalom of restored relationship with You. Help me to forgive others as You have forgiven me.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 103:

*And as far as sunrise is from sunset,
[God] has separated [me] from [my] sins.
Psalm 103:12 (MSG)*

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.

[August 03 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

God's Mission to Restore

Today is Tuesday the 3rd of August, and this week we are exploring the biblical theme of shalom, peace with God, ourselves and others, through the lens of mission.

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 passage from the New Testament. ‘**A**’: **ASKING** God to help us and others and ‘**Y**’: **YIELDING** to His will and His gift of shalom.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's inexhaustible strength today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 73...

Whom have I in heaven but you?

I desire you more than anything on earth.

My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,

but God remains the strength of my heart;

he is mine forever.

Psalm 73:25-26

Pause and pray

Today I join Jesus on his way to heal the terminally ill daughter of an important man. As he rushes to her bedside, he is interrupted by a desperate woman...

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

‘Who touched me?’ Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.’

But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.’

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been

instantly healed. Then he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.'
Luke 8:42b-48

In Jewish law, a woman experiencing prolonged bleeding was considered 'unclean' - unable to take part in the worship of God. Anyone she touched, as well as everything she sat or lay on became 'unclean' for a period of time as well (Lev.15:25-27). For 12 years this unnamed woman had been bleeding; that's over a decade of separation from those around her. Many manuscripts say that she'd spent all she had on ineffective cures.

She needed to be restored not just physically, but relationally, spiritually and financially too. No wonder she took a risk and reached out to touch a traveling teacher with a reputation for healing.

Ask

The woman's faith healed her, even though it seemed like a desperate, this-is-my-last-resort kind of faith. What is my longest standing personal prayer – is it for healing from chronic illness, or am I desperate for God's help in another way?

Jesus, I bring my need to You again, whether I've been praying this prayer for one year, for 12 years, or longer. I offer you the faith I have, even if it feels a little desperate.

Pause and pray

Jesus, I pray now for someone I know who is living with a chronic illness; maybe a life-long challenge like diabetes, an auto-immune disorder or the lasting impact of an injury or illness. In faith, I ask You to heal them, and to give them Your gift of shalom; your wholeness 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.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

'Who touched me?' Jesus asked.

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Luke 8:42b-48

This woman's desperate interruption prevented Jesus from arriving on time to heal the daughter of a religious leader. Also, by touching Jesus, she technically made him 'unclean' by Jewish law. But instead

of getting angry with her, Jesus stops and calls her daughter. The woman came to Jesus in desperation, but she left Him in wholeness and peace.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I often look to myself, others or things like medicine before I think to come to You with my needs. I pause now and surrender everything to You once again. Help me go in peace and bring the hope of Your healing to others I meet today.

Yielding Promise

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

...the God of hope fills me with joy and peace as I trust in him, so that I may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Adapted from Romans 15:13

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.

[August 04 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

The Spirit's Mission of Peace

Today is Wednesday the 4th of August, and this week we are continuing to explore the practice of mission through the biblical lens of shalom ..God's gift of peace, wholeness, completeness and joy.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's presence today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 63...

*So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open,
drinking in your strength and glory.*

In your generous love I am really living at last!

My lips brim praises like fountains.

I bless you every time I take a breath;

My arms wave like banners of praise to you.

Psalm 63:2-4 (MSG)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on John's account of the disciples' first encounter with Jesus after His death and resurrection...

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

John 20:19-23

It makes complete sense that the disciples were hiding in fear. Their Rabbi had been executed by the authorities. Maybe they would be next. The arrival of the resurrected Jesus into a locked room was

unexpected and transformative. Meeting them in the midst of their fear and worry, the first word He speaks is 'peace'.

The peace Jesus gave them was nothing to do with the absence of danger and everything to do with the presence of God. Their circumstances hadn't changed but they were no longer alone.

Ask

What is threatening, worrying or confusing right now?

Jesus, I bring You my fears. Whether my circumstances change or not, I ask for shalom in Your presence.

Pause and pray

I pray for someone in my neighborhood who feels like they're trapped by fear. Maybe someone in an abusive relationship, someone living with serious financial challenges, or someone waiting on a potentially life-changing diagnosis.

Jesus, I ask You to meet them in their fear and worry. By Your presence, protection and provision, bring them Your peace.

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.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

John 20:19-23

At the moment of creation, God breathed life into the very first human (Gen. 2:7). In this story Jesus is breathing a new kind of life into His friends.

Theologian Tom Wright notes that in this moment of new creation, '...the restoring life of God is breathed out through Jesus [again], making new people of the disciples, and, through them, offering this new life to the world. The result is... peace... With that peace, they are enabled to... pronounce, in God's name and by his spirit, the message of forgiveness to all who believe in Jesus.' *

*Tom Wright, *John for Everyone: Part Two*, p150

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, I want to join in with Your mission of forgiveness and restoration – Your mission to bring shalom to every person and place in this world. I yield to Your work of peace in me and through me. I welcome You Holy Spirit. Make me a non-anxious, life-breathing presence today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me reminds me of His promise to Moses in the book of Exodus:

My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.

Exodus 33:14

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.

August 05 2021 (click for audio)

Shalom and Growth

Today is Thursday the 5th of August, and this week we are exploring the connection between mission and the biblical theme of shalom; God's gift of peace and wholeness.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the reassurance of God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 29...

The Lord rules over the floodwaters.

The Lord reigns as king forever.

The Lord gives his people strength.

The Lord blesses them with peace.

Psalm 29:10-11

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the life of the early church. The infamous Saul has encountered the resurrected Jesus and his whole life has changed. Now the man who once persecuted the church is focusing all his passion and intellect on expanding it...

So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 9:28-31

This short passage marks a change of season in the life of the Early Church. Since the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7), the church has been subject to violent opposition. But now, with the departure of Saul – a vocal champion of the resurrected Jesus - the church is entering a season of *shalom*: peace, safety, encouragement and growth.

Ask

What season am I in? Is life tough right now? Is life peaceful? Or am I experiencing something else?

Spirit of all seasons, I need Your strength. Please sustain me with Your peace.

Pause and pray

I think about my church community; what season are we in together? Have we lost momentum after a year of disruption and loss? Or are we energized and eager to share Jesus and gather?

Jesus, strengthen us. Teach us to live in the fear of the Lord. Encourage us by Your Spirit, and equip us to bring Your shalom, Your peace to the people around us.

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.

So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 9:28-31

When I imagine a time of peace, I usually picture a sandy beach, a good book and my feet up - doing nothing. But the time of peace enjoyed by the early church wasn't a period of hibernation or inaction; it was a season of strengthening, encouragement and multiplication. It was shalom in action; an increase in wholeness, blessing and well being; an overflowing into sharing faith and seeing people saved.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, in every season of my life, teach me, 'the unforced rhythms of grace' (Matt. 11:29). I surrender my hurried and harried rhythms of seeking success. I ask again to receive Your shalom. Give me the opportunity to share it with others.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel, that His:

...parting gift to me is Peace. He doesn't leave me the way I'm used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So I don't need to be upset.
Adapted from John 14:27 (MSG)

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.

August 06 2021 (click for audio)

The Transfiguration of Jesus

It's Friday the 6th of August and we are taking a break from exploring shalom and mission to celebrate a special moment in the life of Jesus. Today, many Christians around the world are remembering the transfiguration; the moment when three of Jesus' closest friends witnessed an incredible event.

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

Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive, present and powerful today. Help me to be awake to Your presence, and attuned to Your voice as I pause to adore You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's glorious presence today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 24...

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

The world and all its people belong to him...

Open up, ancient gates!

Open up, ancient doors,

and let the King of glory enter.

Psalm 24:1, 7

Pause and pray

Peter has just named Jesus the Messiah and Jesus has warned his closest followers that He, 'the son of man', will have to suffer, die and be resurrected. After these revelations, Jesus climbs a mountain to spend time with His Father, bringing with Him His three closest friends: Peter, James and John...

As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus... a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.' When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Luke 9:29-36

The Gospels tell us that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray (Mark 1:35). Maybe the disciples expected this mountain trek to be like other prayer retreats they'd taken with Him. Little did they know they were about to witness a spectacular event, rich with echoes of Israel's past.

As Jesus' glory is revealed, Elijah is present, representing the hope of the prophets and the dream of Israel's restoration. Moses is there too; the man who entered God's cloud-covered presence on another mountaintop to receive the law. The law and the prophets; important signposts on God's mission to bring peace, forgiveness and reconciliation to all people and all places. What started as a sleepy prayer retreat has taken a sharp turn toward the incredible. No wonder the disciples 'became fully awake'.

Ask

I love that Luke includes that detail – the disciples 'became fully awake' to the glory of Jesus! Am I sleepwalking through this time of prayer, or even through my life?

Holy Spirit, wake me up; throughout my day!

Pause and pray

Jesus, after a year and a half of pandemic restrictions, economic strain, political upheaval and revelations of injustice, we, your Church, are weary. Wake us up! Strengthen us to join in with Your mission. I name my church and other churches in my community and pray the age old prayer – come Holy Spirit.

Pause and pray

Yield

I return to the passage, eager to meet with Jesus. I imagine myself climbing the mountain with Jesus and His friends. As my breath becomes labored, we stop and find a place to pray. As I sit down I feel the hard ground beneath me, I am weary from the climb, maybe I'm finding it difficult to focus on what I want to say to God, my mind drifting as my eyes droop. I look up, toward Jesus, and gasp...

As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus... a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.' When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Luke 9:29-36

What word, phrase or moment jumped out at me from this story? I pause and share it with Jesus now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus Christ, my King, I pledge myself to You again today. In the words of Richard of Chichester, Help me to 'know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly', today.

Yielding Promise

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

[That] God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:19-20

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.

August 07 2021 (click for audio)

Shalom for the Nations

Today is Saturday the 7th of August and it's our last day exploring God's mission through the lens of shalom.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's greatness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 96...

Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor.

Let all the earth tremble before him.

Tell all the nations, "The Lord reigns!"

The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.

He will judge all peoples fairly.

Psalm 96:9-10

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a pivotal moment in the life of the Early Church. Until now, the Jesus movement has largely stayed within the Jewish community. But now God sends the Apostle Peter to share the good news of Jesus with a *Roman* household...

Cornelius answered: 'Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea." So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.'

Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.'

Acts 10:30-36

Peter never expected that he would speak to an audience like this. It's not a Jewish gathering, where he's familiar with their story, prophecies and hopes. So, he needs to find a new language to describe God's invitation to salvation for those beyond the borders of Israel.

How does he do it? Well, Peter tells his captive audience that God's mission, God's message, is '...the good news of peace through Jesus Christ...'

Ask

What does the good news of peace through Jesus Christ mean for me today?

Jesus, thank you that I find shalom – peace, wholeness, completeness – in and through You.

Pause and pray

Peter was sent to the last people he would have expected God to include in His mission of peace.

God, who are You sending me to today? Give me a name and give me the words to share Your good news of peace, just as you did for Peter.

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.

Cornelius answered: 'Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea." So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.'

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Acts 10:30-36

Cornelius heard God speaking *before* anyone shared the gospel with him. By the time Peter arrived the groundwork had already been done, and so Cornelius was eager to accept the good news of peace through Jesus Christ.

Who among my family, my friends, my college or my neighborhood might God *already* be speaking to?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, show me where You are laying the groundwork for salvation in those around me. Help me be like Peter; available, interruptible, a messenger of peace.

Yielding Promise

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

*Therefore, since I have been justified through faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom I have gained access by faith into this grace in which I now stand...
Adapted from Romans 5:1-2*

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.

August 08 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 8th of August, and today we pause our normal rhythm and return once more to a special Sabbath prayer that helps us rest in shalom.

I've been thinking this week about *shalom* and *creativity*. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask for the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7, NIVUK)

Pause and pray

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"Lord, save me!"
The Lord is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return to your rest, my soul,
for the Lord has been good to you.
Psalm 116:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

In his book, 'Sabbath as Resistance', Walter Brueggemann says: 'I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses ... along with anxiety and violence... Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.'*

* Walter Brueggemann, Sabbath as Resistance

Pause

God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me the quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You, and I welcome Your presence and Your peace – Your Shalom - today.

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will have their 'feet fitted with readiness' to preach the gospel of peace (Ephesians 5:16 NIVUK). And I pray that those who listen will have open ears and hearts, so that many will be saved and made whole today.

Jesus, I pray especially for children and young people in church today who need You to be their Prince of Peace. Those who secretly feel alone. Those who are struggling with anxiety and fear. May Your peace be with them, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, breathe upon us today. Inspire parents and politicians, artists and journalists, health workers and bar workers in church today. Enable us all to bring peace to the places where we are, so that we can change the world for good.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

John 20:21-22

I receive the promise and the commissioning in these words, and I pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit

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

August 09 2021 (click for audio)

A New Kind of Kingdom

Today is Monday the 9th of August, and this is our third week exploring the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom. So far we have considered how shalom connects with prayer and mission. And now we are focusing on its connection with the biblical practice 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

God of Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's righteousness and justice today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 99...

*Mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established fairness.
You have acted with justice
and righteousness throughout Israel.
Exalt the Lord our God!
Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!
Psalm 99:4-5*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on some verses that are usually read at Christmas time. 800 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied the coming of a new kind of King...

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,*

*establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.
Isaiah 9:6-7*

Isaiah foresees a forever-King who will establish a new kind of kingdom; a kingdom of justice and peace for all; a kingdom of *shalom*. What he doesn't describe, however, is just how much the kingdoms of the world will resist this threat to their rule.

'Shalom, or wholeness,' writes Walter Brueggemann, '...happens only for communities engaged in empowering vulnerability. The world hates and resists those who speak for the dismantling required for shalom... the world hates people who say: We can't get peace by a policy of war. We can't get public tranquility by a policy of racial discrimination...'*

*Walter Brueggemann, *Living Towards A Vision*(1982) p.119

And so the lines are drawn. The forever-King, Jesus, comes to dismantle injustice and disharmony and in their place establish His kingdom of justice and peace.

Ask

I have been born again into this new kind of kingdom. Not only have I been saved from my sin, but I now serve a new sovereign, the forever-King Jesus.

I bow the knee to You, King Jesus, and to You alone. I ask You to help me live this day fully aware that I am a citizen of Your kingdom of justice and peace. Help me to live like it.

Pause and pray

According to the Apostle John, I am in the world but not of it (John 17:14, NIV UK). I am still *in* my nation, but I am no longer *of* it, because I am now, first and foremost, of a new kingdom.

With this in mind, I think about the leaders and the government in my nation, and I ask You, King Jesus, to guide them towards justice and peace in every decision 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.

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,*

*Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.
Isaiah 9:6-7*

In Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this passage about the coming of this new King, he writes that, 'there will be no limit to the wholeness he brings. He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going, with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always.' (Isaiah 9:6-7, MSG)

The coming of this new kind of kingdom has begun. Some days, it may not feel like it, and I may not see much evidence of it, but it has begun. And it will keep on coming, in greater measure, until justice and peace cover the whole earth.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, open my eyes and ears to see and hear the signs of Your kingdom today. I yield to You once again, and I will do all I can to seek first Your justice and Your peace in everything I do.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I remember that a day will come when I'll join with the apostle John's Revelation and say that:

*The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.
Revelation 15:11*

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.

August 10 2021 (click for audio)

The Way of Peace

Today is tuesday the 10th of August, and we are exploring the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom, and how it relates to justice.

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. ‘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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice that God, the King of all things, is present with me today, 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.

They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation.

They exult in your righteousness.

You are their glorious strength.

It pleases you to make us strong.

Psalm 89:14-17

Pause and pray

I am reflecting, once again, on words from the book of Isaiah. In yesterday’s passage, he described the coming of a new King, but in today’s passage he focuses on the impact of the world’s leaders...

The way of peace they do not know;

there is no justice in their paths.

They have turned them into crooked roads;

no one who walks along them will know peace.

So justice is far from us,

and righteousness does not reach us.

*We look for light, but all is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.
Like the blind we grope along the wall,
feeling our way like people without eyes.
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight;
among the strong, we are like the dead.
We all growl like bears;
we moan mournfully like doves.
We look for justice, but find none;
for deliverance, but it is far away.
Isaiah 59:8-11*

For Isaiah, justice and peace are inseparable, and he sees neither in Israel. ‘The way of peace they do not know,’ he says, ‘there is no justice in their paths.’ And therefore, the people do not experience the *shalom* of God.

800 years later, the apostle Paul draws on a series of verses from the Old Testament to diagnose the culture of his day, including these same words - ‘the way of peace they do not know’ (Romans 3:17).

Ask

What about today? In what ways am I and my local church community making ‘paths of justice’ so that people can ‘walk along them and know peace’?

Lord Jesus, I’m praying for my church community today. Help us to seek first Your kingdom and Your justice, and to be peacemakers: in person, online, at every opportunity.

Pause and pray

When I hear the line, ‘We look for justice, but find none, for deliverance, but it is far away’; who comes to mind? Maybe a friend, or a situation I am aware of in another part of the world.

Lord Jesus, I bring them to You now and I ask You to give them strength, to light up their darkness, to make their paths straight. May they find justice and peace.

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 way of peace they do not know;
there is no justice in their paths.
They have turned them into crooked roads;
no one who walks along them will know peace.
So justice is far from us,*

*and righteousness does not reach us.
We look for light, but all is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.
Like the blind we grope along the wall,
feeling our way like people without eyes.
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight;
among the strong, we are like the dead.
We all growl like bears;
we moan mournfully like doves.
We look for justice, but find none;
for deliverance, but it is far away.
Isaiah 59:8-11*

What word or phrase jumped out at me from these verses?

Maybe the word or phrase is a word from God to me today? Or maybe it's a prompt to pray for someone else. I take a few moments to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I surrender all of my plans and priorities to You. Help me to fix my eyes on You and follow the paths of justice and peace that You've already walked for me today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 119 that God's:

*...word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.
Psalm 119:105 (NIV UK)*

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.

August 11 2021 (click for audio)

Prisoners of Hope

Today is Wednesday the 11th of August, and this week we are continuing to explore the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom and how it relates to the biblical practice 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

God of Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to put my hope in God's justice today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 33...

*He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.
We put our hope in the Lord.
He is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord,
for our hope is in you alone.
Psalm 33:5,20-22*

Pause and pray

Today, I am reflecting on another ancient prophecy that was eventually fulfilled by Jesus. The Israelites were still suffering the impact of decades in exile when Zechariah spoke these incredible words...

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
and the battle-bow will be broken.*

*He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.
Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;
even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.
Zechariah 9:9-12*

For 70 years the Israelites had been exiled in Babylon, and their return to Jerusalem had been difficult and disappointing. Undaunted, Zechariah urges them to see beyond their circumstances and encourages them to hope again.

The coming king, he says, will unite the divided kingdoms of Israel, will end all wars, and will ‘proclaim peace to the nations’ - to *all* nations, not just Israel. In spite of the circumstances there *is* hope.

I love the way that Eugene Peterson paraphrases the final verse in this passage. ‘I’ll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells. Come, hope-filled prisoners!’ (Zechariah 9:12, MSG)

Ask

Is there an area of my life where I feel like a prisoner at the moment? As I hear that invitation, ‘Come, hope-filled prisoner!’ How do I feel? I take a few moments to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Loving Father, reach out to those who feel helplessly trapped in a ‘hopeless cell’ today. Whether it’s an incurable illness or a life-controlling addiction, an abusive relationship or crushing debt. I ask You to release these prisoners, and give them hope.

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.

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
and the battle-bow will be broken.*

*He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.
Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;
even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.*
Zechariah 9:9-12

I almost missed it. There's only one thing that Zechariah's listeners are expected to do in response to his prophecy about this king who will bring justice and peace to the nations. Return.

'Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope.' Turn around. Change direction. Come back. 'Return... and I will restore you,' says the Lord.

What might this mean for me today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God of Shalom, my hope is in You. I surrender my need-to-know things, to have it all mapped out, to be in control in order to be OK, and I put my hope in You and I return to You instead. I may still be a prisoner in some ways, but I am a hope-filled prisoner.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Isaiah 40 that:

those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:31

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.

August 12 2021 (click for audio)

Peace with God

Today is Thursday the 12th of August, and this week we are continuing to explore the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom and how it relates to the biblical practice 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

God of Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's enduring love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 106...

Praise the Lord!

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

His faithful love endures forever.

Who can list the glorious miracles of the Lord?

Who can ever praise him enough?

There is joy for those who deal justly with others

and always do what is right.

Psalm 106:1-3

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Having told them about the power of sin over all humanity (Romans 1-2), and about God's saving response in Christ (Romans 3-4), Paul begins to explain, 'Now what?'...

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.
Romans 5:1-5 (NLT)

First and foremost, says Paul, I have peace with God. Not I *can* have peace or I *might* have peace, but I *have* peace – *shalom*, wholeness, completeness. I have hope too, and this hope doesn't disappoint, because it is rooted in the unfailing, unconditional love of God.

So, I have peace, I have hope and I have love. Unfortunately, these aren't the only things that I have, because Paul also says that I will have problems and trials. Surprisingly, he says that I can rejoice when these problems and trials are happening. Not just when they're over, but in the midst of them. It's not that problems and trials produce rejoicing; that would be ridiculous; but neither can they prevent rejoicing.

Ask

What problems or trials am I facing at the moment? Am I enduring them in a grin-and-bear-it way, or am I enduring them with rejoicing? How could I do that today?

Pause and pray

I think of someone I know who always seems to associate life's troubles and trials with God's disapproval or absence.

God of Shalom, I ask You to draw near to them. Reassure them and heal their hurting heart. Give Your Holy Spirit to them and fill them with 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.

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.
Romans 5:1-5 (NLT)

In these few extraordinary verses, Paul summarizes my relationship with all three persons of the Trinity. I have peace with God because Jesus has brought me into this place; it's undeserved, and it's a privilege, but it's where I am. Furthermore, I know love because God has given me the Holy Spirit to fill my heart with love.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father... Jesus, Son of God... Holy Spirit... thank You. What can I say but thank You for the undeserved privilege of being made right with You and experiencing peace with You. I did nothing, and You did everything. I have nothing, and You give everything. I yield to You with deep gratitude and rejoicing today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Romans 8 that:

*My present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in me.
Romans 8:18 (NIV UK, adapted)*

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.

August 13 2021 (click for audio)

No More Praying Nice

Today is Friday the 13th of August, and this week we are continuing to explore the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom and how it relates to the biblical practice 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

God of Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's peace-making purposes today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 85...

*I will listen for what God, the Lord, has to say;
surely he will speak of peace
To his people and to his faithful.
May they not turn to foolishness!
Near indeed is his salvation for those who fear him;
glory will dwell in our land.
Love and truth will meet;
justice and peace will kiss.
Psalm 85:9-11 (NABRE)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the final chapter of the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome, where he warns them about the false teachers who are making trouble...

*I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
Romans 16:17-20*

In The Message, Eugene Peterson adds a little bit of oomph to the final line of today's reading. He puts it like this: 'The God of peace will come down on Satan with both feet, stomping him into the dirt!' (Romans 16:20, MSG) I like that. There's no negotiating, there's no don't-do-it-again, there's just Satan getting stomped into the dirt.

And it reminds me that God's peace isn't weak or soft, but strong. The God of peace *is the* God of justice. *Shalom* is the coming together of peace and justice. It means putting things right; and sometimes that requires a bit of stomping.

Ask

Where might Satan be making trouble in my life at the moment?

God of peace, perhaps I've 'prayed nice' about this a little too long. I ask You to give me strength to stomp on every evil scheme today. (I might even stomp around the room to help me pray this.)

Pause and pray

As I think about my nation, I think about the things that need to be put right. Homelessness and poverty. Corruption in government. Environmental destruction. Greed in business. Injustice and discrimination.

God of Shalom, come down on these evil schemes and strategies with both feet, stomp them into the dirt. Let peace and justice rise.

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 you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Romans 16:17-20

In spite of Paul's warnings, his message is ultimately one of hope. The work of Satan will ultimately fail and the God of peace will prevail through his people.

Walter Brueggemann puts it like this: 'We know God's vision of justice and wholeness will win out, and so we need not be fearful or grim like the world. The church is left free to risk for shalom because we are sure of its coming. God's shalom is on the way because Jesus has declared it so...'*

*Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward A Vision* (1982), p.120

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God of Shalom, to use Paul's words, help me to be 'wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil'... and give me the strength to keep stomping whenever I need to.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John 16:33 that:

...in Him I may have peace. In this world I will have trouble. But take heart! He has overcome the world.'

John 16:33 (NIV UK, adapted)

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.

August 14 2021 (click for audio)

Feast Day – Maximilian Kolbe

It's Saturday the 14th of August. Regular users of this app will know that we sometimes pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith... people 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 we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Maximilian Kolbe, a brave hero of mission, who was killed on this day in 1941 in the Auschwitz death camp.

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 rescue and restoration, thank You for Your great and beautiful mission in the world. Here I am Lord, fill me with Your Spirit and send me.

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's salvation today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 40...

Please, Lord, rescue me!

Come quickly, Lord, and help me.

May those who try to destroy me

be humiliated and put to shame.

May those who take delight in my trouble

be turned back in disgrace.

Let them be horrified by their shame,

for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"

But may all who search for you

be filled with joy and gladness in you.

Psalm 40:13-16a

In 1906, when Maximilian Kolbe was just 12 years old, he had a vision which shaped the rest of his life. In it, he was offered two crowns, one red and the other white. *'The white one meant that I should persevere in purity,' said Maximilian, 'and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both.'**

** Regis J Armstrong; Ingrid J. Peterson (2010). The Franciscan Tradition. Liturgical Press. p.50*

Maximilian previously wanted to become a soldier with the Polish army, but the vision led him to join the Franciscan novitiate as a 16-year-old instead. He was ordained in 1910, and immediately began to reach out to others so that they could encounter the love of God. Along with a small group of friars, he founded a monastery near Warsaw, which they used as an evangelism base. They made good use of modern communications technology, including printed media and radio (they even had plans for a movie studio), and as a result of their evangelistic activity, nearly 1000 people joined them over the next ten years, both in Warsaw and in another monastery that they set up in Nagasaki, in Japan.

World War 2 started in 1939, and Warsaw was captured by the Nazis. Because of his German father, Maximilian was asked to sign a register which would have given him rights and protection, but he refused. Instead, he and the few friars who had not fled provided shelter for Polish refugees and hid around 2000 Jews.

The Nazis eventually closed the monastery down and arrested the friars in February 1941, and Maximilian was sent to Auschwitz. A few weeks after his arrival, ten men from Maximilian's barracks were chosen to be starved to death as an example to others in the camp. When Maximilian heard one of the men cry out in fear for his family he volunteered to take the man's place.

Maximilian ministered to the other nine men as they all suffered extreme starvation and dehydration. After three weeks, only Maximilian and two others were still alive, so the Nazis decided to kill them with lethal injections. On that day – 14 August 1941 - Maximilian Kolbe received the red crown of martyrdom that he had seen in his vision 35 years earlier.

Ask

I am deeply moved and challenged by this story, and I am reminded, vividly, of the apostle John's words: 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.' (John 15:13)

Lord Jesus, there's a lot of fear in me where love should be. I ask You to fill me with a deeper, wider love for others - friends, neighbors, and even for those I don't like (or don't like me).

Pause and pray

Lord Jesus, I think of those around the world who are imprisoned right now – and those whose lives are under threat – because of their faith. I ask You to give them strength to persevere, and I cry out to You, please deliver them from evil.

Pause and pray

Above the West door on Westminster Abbey in London there are ten limestone statues of modern martyrs – people whose faith in Jesus and great love for others resulted in them being killed – including Martin Luther King Jr, Esther John, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Manche Masemola and Maximilian Kolbe.

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I may not ever face the challenge of dying for You. Nonetheless, I choose to take up my cross once again today. I yield to You, and I pray a risky prayer... help me to die to myself and live for You just a little bit more today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I remember the Apostle Paul's extraordinary promise that,

'for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain'

Philippians 1:21, (NIV UK)

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.

August 15 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

It's Sunday the 15th of August, and today we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about *shalom*. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask for the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"Lord, save me!"
The Lord is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return to your rest, my soul,
for the Lord has been good to you.
Psalm 116:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

In his book, '*Sabbath as Resistance*', Walter Brueggemann says: 'I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses ... along with anxiety and violence... Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.'*

* Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*

Pause

God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me the quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You, and I welcome Your presence and Your peace – Your Shalom - today.

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will have their 'feet fitted with readiness' to preach the gospel of peace (Ephesians 5:16 NIVUK). And I pray that those who listen will have open ears and hearts, so that many will be saved and made whole today.

Jesus, I pray especially for children and young people in church today who need You to be their Prince of Peace. Those who secretly feel alone. Those who are struggling with anxiety and fear. May Your peace be with them, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, breathe upon us today. Inspire parents and politicians, artists and journalists, health workers and bar workers in church today. Enable us all to bring peace to the places where we are, so that we 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 practicing peace-making in simple ways in their home, their school or their workplace.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

John 20:21-22

I receive the promise and the commissioning in these words, and I pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit.

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

[August 16 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

Insiders and Outsiders

Today is Monday, the 16th of August, and we are continuing our Shalom series. This week we're looking at it through the lens of one of our six practices: hospitality. Over the next few days, we will look at how Jesus' radical teaching and practice of hospitality subverted the dominant culture of his day and created shalom.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's help today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 146...

*But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.*

*He made heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them.*

He keeps every promise forever.

*He gives justice to the oppressed
and food to the hungry.*

The Lord frees the prisoners.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down.

The Lord loves the godly.

Psalm 146:5-8

Pause and pray

In today's passage, Jesus offers a vision of hospitality that breaks all social convention.

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at

the resurrection of the righteous.

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus' world had its own social strata; its own class system. It had insiders and outsiders; and it had doorkeepers; the ones who decide who are insiders or outsiders (reminds me of high school!). These rules came into focus particularly around hospitality: who you had in your home and who reclined at your table.

Jesus' vision of *shalom* - of God's rule and reign that creates flourishing for all – includes a table where everyone is welcome. Where you give to those who can't repay you. Jesus invites us to make friends with all the wrong kinds of people.

Ask

When I throw a dinner party, who is on my invite list? Do I feel a bit cranky or put out when those I have over for a meal don't invite me back over to their home?

Jesus I pray You would open my heart wider. Would You help me make space at my table; particularly for those who I may think don't deserve to be there. As I pray, would You bring to mind someone who needs my hospitality?

Pause and pray

God, I pray for Your church. Lord please forgive us for the subtle ways we categorize those around us as insiders or outsiders. Please forgive us when we function as doorkeepers, and leave your friends out in the cold and lonely. Who can I invite to church this week? Would you bring someone to mind.

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.

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14:12 -14

Christine Pohl, in her book *Making Room*, has this to say about this passage in Luke:

'God's guest list includes a disconcerting number of poor and broken people, those who appear to bring little to any gathering except their need. The distinctive quality of Christian hospitality is that it offers a generous welcome to the "least," without concern for advantage or benefit to the host. Such hospitality reflects God's greater hospitality that welcomes the

undeserving, provides the lonely with a home, and sets a banquet table for the hungry.*

*Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, p. 26

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I give You my home and my table. May they be agents of shalom; of generous welcome to the 'least', the undeserving, the lonely and the hungry.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Isaiah 58:

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen...
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

*Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.*

Isaiah 58:6a, 7,8

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.

August 17 2021 (click for audio)

Party Time!

Today is tuesday the 17th of August, and this week we are continuing to explore hospitality and shalom. 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. ‘**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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s hospitality today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 36...

*How precious is your unfailing love, O God!
All humanity finds shelter
in the shadow of your wings.
You feed them from the abundance of your own house,
letting them drink from your river of delights.
For you are the fountain of life,
the light by which we see.
Psalm 36:7-9*

Pause and pray

Jesus liked a good dinner party. Today I reflect on this passage where he describes his idea of a good time...

*When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”
Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’
“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’“Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on*

my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

"Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Luke 14:15-24

God sets a table for all of us, but many of us are too important, too busy, too preoccupied to respond to His invitation. Perhaps the gift of the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame is that they may have space and time, and they know their need. So they come to the table, feast on all God's goodness, and are welcomed into His shalom.

Ask

God I'm sorry for the times I've been too important, too busy, and too preoccupied to respond to your invitation to fellowship and feast with you, giving up my place at the table. How can I reorder my priorities? I want to taste and see that you are good. (Psalm 34:8)

Pause and pray

God, I pray for people with disabilities in my community; that they would find their place at Your table. And I pray that my church would be like the servant – going out and inviting them in, making space and room. How can my faith community be fully accessible in every way so that together we may feast on Your goodness.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I picture it in my mind's eye. Perhaps I'm the host, excited about the feast I've prepared. Maybe I'm the servant, frustrated as I try to fill the table. Perhaps I'm an unexpected guest, surprised and delighted at the unforeseen turn of events?

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'" Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

"'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Luke 14:15-24

Theologian Walter Brueggemann says this of Jesus' ideals of hospitality:

'Jesus is clearly radicalizing the rules... for giving parties, and in doing that he is tampering with the primal ordering of society... It is important to recognize this radical critique and his incredible alternative. He is not just creating a new guest list, but he is offering a whole new vision of reality'*

* Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision – Biblical Reflections on Shalom*, p81

A new vision of reality. A table set for anyone who responds to the invitation, be they rich or poor, abled or disabled. All feasting together in the kingdom of God.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God I respond to Your invitation. I take my place at Your table. I will feast on the abundance of Your House. I will drink from the river of your delight. You are the fountain of my life, and You are the light by which I see.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says through the psalmist in Psalm 22:

The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him – may your hearts live forever!

Psalm 22:26

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.

August 18 2021 (click for audio)

Homes of Shalom

Today is Wednesday the 18th of August, and this week we are learning from Jesus what shalom has to do with hospitality.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's salvation today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 62...

*I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken.
Psalm 62:1-2*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a passage where Jesus surprises everyone by inviting Himself over for supper!

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.
When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."
So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
Luke 19:1-10*

When Jesus passes by, Zacchaeus scales a tree so he can see; and gets more than he bargained for! Jesus cheekily invites himself over for supper. It's an interesting contrast: previously when Jesus was a guest of a religious leader, he was met with disdain and disapproval (Luke 7:36-50), but when he is the guest of a 'sinner', His presence in the home radically reorients Zacchaeus' life!

Zacchaeus' home becomes a home of shalom – of peace, justice, and salvation.

Ask

So Jesus, wanna come over for dinner?

I take a few moments now to imagine Jesus walking through my front door. What would He see? What might he say? How might I feel? How might I respond?

Pause and pray

Jesus, I pray that You would invite Yourself over to the homes of 'sinners'. Pimps and gangsters. Con artists and cynics. Corrupt business execs and pedophiles. Would Your presence invade their space. Would You do that thing that you do; make all things new. May their dwellings become homes of shalom; of peace, justice and salvation.

I think of the most unlikely person I know that Jesus would have dinner with, 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.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10

I love how Jesus is able to be both guest and host: embracing the vulnerability of possible rejection and stepping out of his domain into someone else's space. But at the same time carrying His own

ecosystem, His own atmosphere, that creates a whole new life wherever He is welcome. Entering into people's homes, He establishes Himself their home.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus You are my home. Come and invade my space – dwell with me. I welcome Your peace, Your justice, Your salvation, Your shalom.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John 14:

Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:23

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.

August 19 2021 (click for audio)

Peace Be With You

Today is Thursday the 19th of August, and this week we are exploring the theme of shalom and looking at how Jesus practiced hospitality.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's help today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 146...

*But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.*

*He made heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them.*

He keeps every promise forever.

*He gives justice to the oppressed
and food to the hungry.*

The Lord frees the prisoners.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down.

The Lord loves the godly.

Psalm 146:5-8

Pause and pray

Jesus is playing guest and host again, this time with the travelers on the Road to Emmaus. He's listened to them along their journey and now sits with them at the table...

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to

Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

Luke 24:30-36

In the wake of the crucifixion, the travelers are grieving, confused and discouraged. Jesus practices hospitality by listening deeply to them, holding space for the swirl of their emotions. He invites them to inhabit the biblical narrative, helping them make sense of what they have experienced and helps them find their place in the story. Later in their journey He receives their hospitality, shares a meal, and reveals His true nature to them. Peace - *shalom* - was with them.

Ask

Jesus, I give You the swirl of my emotions today. Would You help me make sense of the things I am experiencing that are robbing me of peace? Would You speak to me through Your word so that I may find myself in Your story? May I hear Your voice saying to me, ‘Peace be with you.’

Pause and pray

God, today I pray for the bereaved: all of those who have lost loved ones this year, or who have painful anniversaries of loss coming up. Accompany them on their road of suffering. Inhabit the empty place at their table. Would You help them make sense of their lives in the wake of their loss? Bring Your shalom.

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 he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

Luke 24:30-36

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this about the radical hospitality of deep listening:

‘The first service one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them... It is God’s love to us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear... Christians so often think they must

always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.*'

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper, 1954), p. 97.

It's amazing how much better I feel when I can talk about what is troubling me, and be deeply heard by someone. It's the kind of hospitality that brings *shalom*.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield myself to God today with this prayer from the Iona Abbey Worship Book:

*Stay with us, Lord, since the day is far spent and the night is coming:
kindle our hearts on the way, that we may recognize you in the Scriptures,
in the breaking of the bread, and in each other.*

*As the poor widow welcomed Elijah, let us be open to the richness and miracle in meeting.
As Abraham and Sarah welcomed passing strangers, let us entertain the possibility of angels in
disguise. Let our eyes be opened, that we may recognize in our neighbor the divine presence of
Christ. ***

***Iona Abbey Worship Book (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose, 2001), p. 64.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I am comforted by the Psalmist who says in Psalm 10:

*You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.
Psalm 10:17 (NIV UK)*

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.

August 20 2021 (click for audio)

Bernard of Clairvaux – Hero of Prayer

Today is Friday the 20th of August and the feast day of Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the great pioneers of monasticism, who died on this day in 1153.

On feast days, we pause 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*, which are Prayer, Creativity, Justice, Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Bernard of Clairvaux, a hero of prayer.

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 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

Born in France in 1090, Bernard's mother died when he was just 19. Following his call to a life of prayer at 22, he turned up at his local monastery with no fewer than 30 friends who all wanted to become monks with him. He was a natural leader and they set about reviving the community which grew quickly. In 1115, Bernard planted his first monastery at a place he named Clairvaux in North-Eastern France.

Over his lifetime, Bernard was used by God – despite many mistakes – to completely revitalize the Cistercian Order. He also helped to establish 163 other monasteries in different parts of Europe.

Bernard was also 'instrumental in re-emphasizing the importance of *Lectio Divina* (Latin for 'divine reading') and contemplation on Scripture within the Cistercian Order... He considered *Lectio Divina*

and contemplation guided by the Holy Spirit the keys to nourishing Christian spirituality.’*

* Lawrence S. Cunningham and Keith J. Egan, *‘Meditation and contemplation’ Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition*(Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996) pp90–91

Bernard wrote about the Bible: ‘For our meditations on the Word who is the Bridegroom, on his glory, his elegance, power and majesty, become in a sense his way of speaking to us. And not only that, but when with eager minds we examine his rulings, the decrees from his own mouth; when we meditate on his law day and night, let us be assured that the Bridegroom is present, and that he speaks his message of happiness to us lest our trials should prove more than we can bear.’**

**Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Jazzybee Verlag: Kindle Edition) p182

Sometimes, I approach the Bible in a utilitarian manner. I want to skim quickly, find something helpful and then use it to achieve whatever desired result I am looking for.

Lectio Divina is a different way of approaching the Scriptures. It is a prayerful way of reading the Word of God in order to encounter the living Word, Jesus Christ. In *Lectio Divina*, I read slowly, repeatedly. I reflect on the Word, I respond to it and rest in it, just like I am doing right now.

Ask

How do I approach the Scriptures? Do I read them, or am I read by them? Do I attempt to master them, or do I allow them to master me? Do I believe that God is present as I read, and that He has a message for me?

Pause and pray

Bernard said that meditating on the Word strengthens us so that we can face the trials and burdens that are an inevitable part of human experience. Often, when I’m struggling, I take a simple phrase from the Bible, like ‘The LORD is the stronghold of my life’ (Psalm 27:1) and I pray it over and over throughout my day. I find that it redirects my thinking and changes my emotional chemistry for the better.

Who needs help today?

Lord, I ask You for a verse from Your Word to pray over and over them throughout the day.

Pause and pray

Yield

Bernard of Clairvaux also said, ‘Consider how great is the grace of intimacy which results from this encounter of the soul and the Word, and how great the confidence which follows this intimacy! I think such a soul need not fear to say, “my beloved is mine”’.***

*** Bernard of Clairvaux, *Intimacy in Prayer: Wisdom from Bernard of Clairvaux* (Pauline Books and Media: Kindle Edition)

Some say the hardest and longest journey a person can make is the 18 inches from head to heart. Bernard of Clairvaux taught that meditating on the Word creates that vital link. Modern-day contemplatives like Misty Edwards echo this conviction, singing:

*'I'll take my cold, cold heart
I'll take my unrenewed mind
I'll take Your Word in my hand and then I'll give You time
To come and melt me'******

**** Misty Edwards, *'What Only You Can Do', 'Always on His Mind'* album (Forerunner Music, 2014)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that I am nourished by Your Word; it is as sweet as honey. I know that if I take the time to savor its taste, it is a doorway of revelation, a doorway of encounter, but, so often, I bolt it down like fast food.

Today, I choose to slow down, I steep myself in Your Word, expectant and hungry for Your voice.

Yielding Promise

I thank You, God, for the encouragement of Psalm 1, that if I delight in, and meditate on Your Word, then my life will bear fruit for You (Psa. 1:2–3).

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.

August 21 2021 (click for audio)

The Gift of Shalom

Today is Saturday the 21st of August, and this week we are wrapping up our exploration of shalom and hospitality

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's strength today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 29...

The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea.

The God of glory thunders.

The Lord thunders over the mighty sea.

The voice of the Lord is powerful;

the voice of the Lord is majestic...

The Lord rules over the floodwaters.

The Lord reigns as king forever.

The Lord gives his people strength.

The Lord blesses them with peace.

Psalm 29:3,4,10,11

Pause and pray

This week I have looked at how Jesus used the practice of hospitality to create shalom – turning social convention on its head. I wrap it up today with Jesus' final meal with his friends. They have finished eating, and now He is sharing His heart with them just before He is captured, tortured, and killed...

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

Jesus knows He is going, and He knows what He is leaving behind. His peace. His *shalom*. *Shalom* that includes the excluded, making space for everybody at His table. *Shalom* that fills homes with peace, justice and salvation. *Shalom* that soothes fractious and fearful hearts. *Shalom* - God's gift that is polar opposite to our fallen world's 'gifts' of self seeking, injustice, oppression, turmoil and anxiety.

Ask

Have I received God's gift of *shalom*, His peace, or are my hands still full of the 'gifts' that the world gives?

God, in the quiet, I notice my self seeking, my turmoil, my anxiety. I talk to You about any injustice or oppression that is impacting my life. Maybe I'm a recipient; maybe I'm a perpetrator! I lay it all down before You, and with gratitude I receive Your peace.

Pause and pray

It is reported that Teresa of Ávila said,

*'Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good...'*

Jesus, Prince of Peace, would Your church manifest your life and Your shalom 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.

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

Sometimes our times around the table together are full of fun and banter. Other times we talk about the things that really matter. We nourish one another with food, with friendship, and with shared vulnerability. This last supper was one of those times. I imagine that after Jesus' death, his friends replayed this meal and this conversation over and over in their minds, savoring its sweetness and laying hold of the gift of Jesus' peace.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield to God today with this prayer from poet John O'Donohue:

*'We end this meal with grace
For the joy and nourishment of food,
The slowed time away from the world
To come into presence with each other
And sense the subtle lives behind our faces,*

*The different colors of our voices,
The edges of hungers we keep private,
The circle of love that unites us.
We pray the wise spirit who keeps us
To change the structures that make others hunger
And that after such grace we might now go forth
And impart dignity wherever we partake.'* *

**John O'Donohue, To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings p. 92*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 37:

*A little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look for them, they will not be found.
But the meek will inherit the land
and enjoy peace and prosperity.
Psalm 37:10-11 (NLT)*

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.

August 22 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 22nd of August, and today we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about *shalom*. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask for the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7, (NIV UK))

Pause and pray

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"Lord, save me!"
The Lord is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return to your rest, my soul,
for the Lord has been good to you.
Psalm 116:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

In his book, 'Sabbath as Resistance', Walter Brueggemann says: 'I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses ... along with anxiety and violence... Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.'*

* Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*

Pause

God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me the quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You, and I welcome Your presence and Your peace – Your Shalom - today.

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will have their 'feet fitted with readiness' to preach the gospel of peace (Ephesians 5:16 NIVUK). And I pray that those who listen will have open ears and hearts, so that many will be saved and made whole today.

Jesus, I pray especially for children and young people in church today who need You to be their Prince of Peace. Those who secretly feel alone. Those who are struggling with anxiety and fear. May Your peace be with them, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, breathe upon us today. Inspire parents and politicians, artists and journalists, health workers and bar workers in church today. Enable us all to bring peace to the places where we are, so that we 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 practicing peace-making in simple ways in their home, their school or their workplace

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.
John 20:21-22

I receive the promise and the commissioning in these words, and I pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit.

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

[August 23 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

Train for War No More

Today is Monday the 23rd of August. This week we are exploring the shalom presence and peace of God through the lens of the life-long pursuit 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

God of Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's radiant presence today, 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

Today, I'm reflecting on the words of Isaiah, an ancient prophet with a vision of peace and wholeness...

*Many peoples will come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.*

*He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.'*

*The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

*He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.*

*They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.*

*Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.*

Come, descendants of Jacob,

let us walk in the light of the Lord.
Isaiah 2:3-5

Ralph Bunche was the first African-American to win a Nobel peace prize. His life was dedicated to working for peace in the Middle East. Today, there is a park in New York named after him, and in this park is the Isaiah wall, which is inscribed with the promise that there will be a day when our world will not 'train for war any more.'

"This idea is startling and beautiful to me: even though humanity can work for peace, ultimately it can only come through Jesus and his return. There will be a time when His presence brings peace to the whole earth."

Ask

Father, I pray that You would begin in my heart a work of peace. It's easy to look outside at the places of war and division and ignore my own battles. I pray that I would rest in the peace of knowing Your presence in my life today.

Pause and pray

I think of a particular place of dispute or conflict, in my own home, in my wider community, or in my nation. I pray that You would show me how to build bridges, how to bring healing, and how to speak peace over the places of division that I might encounter 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.

*Many peoples will come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.'
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.
Come, descendants of Jacob,*

let us walk in the light of the Lord.
Isaiah 2:3-5

I am reminded of the importance of walking in the paths of the Lord. I think of the many distractions that pull my heart and mind, my time and attention away from walking in the way of Jesus.

I imagine my day ahead with paths leading in different directions. I think about the places I will go and the people I will meet.

God, I ask You to make clear the paths and choices that will lead to the peace of Your presence.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, I pray that You will reveal to me the radiant presence of Jesus, walking with me on the paths of my daily life. I repent of the places where I have allowed distractions and discouragement to divert me. Refocus my attention on the light of Your presence today.

Yielding Promise

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

*Because of God's tender mercy,
the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide us to the path of peace.*
Luke 1:78-79 (NLT)

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.

[August 24 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

Peace and Presence

Today is Tuesday the 24th of August. This week we are exploring the shalom presence and peace of God, and how we can learn to walk in the reverence and awe of the name of God.

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. ‘**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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s unfailing love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 33...

*We put our hope in the Lord.
He is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord,
for our hope is in you alone.
Psalm 33:20-22*

Pause and pray

Today I reflect on a passage from the Old Testament written to priests. It is a holy warning about the power of their words...

*And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.
‘For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth.
Malachi 2:4-7*

I am reminded of the weight of my words. I can speak words that carry life, hope, and peace or I can speak words that bring strife, pain, and division. I have seen words bring deep wounds, both inside the family of God and in my wider community.

I wonder how I have used the power of my words this week. Have I reacted sharply? Have I spoken truthfully? Have my words reflected the kindness of Jesus?

Ask

Holy Spirit, I pray for a fresh sense of Your presence. Help me speak words of peace, healing, and hope, especially in places that have been fractured by pain and bitterness.

Pause and pray

I name now friends and neighbors who have never experienced the faithful love of God.

God, give me boldness to speak to them about You and show them Your faithful love 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.

And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,' says the Lord Almighty. 'My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

'For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth.

Malachi 2:4-7

Over the years, I have felt deep pain and disappointment when I have seen Christian leaders fall into places of moral failure. I have seen it with close friends and public leaders.

I think of my own places of failure, and the unfailing kindness of Jesus.

This passage calls for a reverence and awe of God, and commands holiness in the life of leaders. I take a moment to thank God for those in my life who have modeled to me the holy grace and kindness of Jesus.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father, I repent of my own sin and ask for a deep sense of the beauty of Your holiness. I ask that I would be captivated, charmed, and entranced by knowing You again today, and that I would live a holy life as I follow 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 1 Thessalonians,

May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

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.

August 25 2021 (click for audio)

Bless With Peace

Today is Wednesday the 25th of August. This week we are exploring the shalom presence and peace of God, and how we can learn to receive and give the blessing of God to others.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's glory and majesty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 111...

*How amazing are the deeds of the Lord!
All who delight in him should ponder them.
Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty.
His righteousness never fails.
He causes us to remember his wonderful works.
How gracious and merciful is our Lord!
Psalm 111:2-4*

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on a beautiful prayer that reminds me that God is a blessing God. At the church of my youth, my pastor sang these words over me each week, but they were originally given to Moses as a high priestly blessing over the people of God...

The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

""The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace.'"
'So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.'
Numbers 6:22-27

I am reminded today of the beauty of the posture of God's heart towards me and his desire that my life would be blessed. In his book *Gentle and Lowly*, Dane Ortlund writes, 'the kindness of Jesus is kinder than we would be to ourselves.'*

**Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2020), p211*

Ask

I take a moment to remind myself that the deep desire of God is that I would receive His blessing. I look for the sunshine of His favor in my life and the deep peace and shalom wholeness of His presence.

Father, I don't always feel blessed, and life is not always easy. I pray that You would show me how to find Your blessing even in my places of pain. Reposition my heart to receive Your peace no matter my circumstance.

Pause and pray

I think of someone in my life who does not feel blessed by God. Perhaps they are in a place of physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.

Lord, would You bless them and keep them. Would Your face shine upon them, and would You be gracious to them. Would You turn Your face towards them and give them peace.

Holy Spirit, show me how to share the blessing of Your presence with those who feel You are absent.

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 said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

""The Lord bless you

and keep you;

the Lord make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

the Lord turn his face towards you

and give you peace.'"

'So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.'

Numbers 6:22-27

I think of the places in my life where I have doubted the radiant glory and bright presence of God; where I have only seen the darkness and questions, instead of hope and blessing.

I remember Moses' bold prayer in Exodus 33: 'Now show me your glory.' And that God answered him by saying: 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.' (Exodus 33:18-19)

God, teach me to live with the same boldness and expectancy Moses had; that the brightness of Your presence will be stronger than any place of darkness in my life.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I pray in the words of St. Dimitri of Rostov:

*Come, my Light, and illumine my darkness.
Come, my Life, and revive me from death.
Come, my Physician, and heal my wounds.
Come, Flame of divine love, and burn up the thorns of my sins,
Kindling my heart with the flame of thy love.
Come, my King, sit upon the throne of my heart and reign there.
For thou alone art my King and my Lord. ***

***Original Prayer by St. Dimitri of Rostov taken from: Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Church (St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1979), p18*

Yielding Promise

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

*Let your light shine for all to see.
For the glory of the Lord rises to shine on you.
Darkness as black as night covers all the nations of the earth,
but the glory of the Lord rises and appears over you.
Isaiah 60:1-2 (NLT)*

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.

August 26 2021 (click for audio)

Marked by Presence and Peace

Today is thursday the 26th of August. This week we are exploring the shalom presence and peace of God, with an invitation to learn how to rest in God's presence.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's direction today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 23...

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Psalm 23:1-3*

Pause and pray

In the book of Exodus, we often find Moses and God in conversation, speaking with the honesty and intimacy of two close friends. In today's reading, Moses speaks frankly about the concerns and challenges facing him as a leader and asks for a fresh sense of God's presence with him...

Moses said to the Lord, 'You have been telling me, "Lead these people," but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, "I know you by name and you have found favor with me." If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.'
The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'
Exodus 33:12-14

Last year, I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. It was one of the best and worst experiences of my life. A friend gave me an excellent recommendation on summit day; to choose one passage of scripture to sustain me when I had used every ounce of my strength.

As I climbed that final day, battling altitude sickness, complete exhaustion, and blinding cold, I repeated this line: 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

Meditating on God's presence sustained me when I was weary, spent and exhausted, through not just the uphill climb, but also through the unexpected challenge of the downhill trek.

Ask

Father, I want a deeper longing for Your presence. Help me hunger for Your Word more than for my daily food, thirst for Your Spirit more than for a cold drink of water, and desire Your intimacy more than any other lover.

Pause and pray

I think of someone in my wider circle who is living with great weariness. I name them, and their area of pain or burden.

Good Shepherd, would You lead them beside still waters and restore their soul 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.

Moses said to the Lord, 'You have been telling me, "Lead these people," but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, "I know you by name and you have found favor with me." If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.'
The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'
Exodus 33:12-14

I think about the honesty of Moses in this passage. He approaches God with frankness, and asks for specific direction. He is unclear on who will go with him for the work ahead, but he boldly asks God to teach him how to lead. His primary goal is to know the Lord and find favor with Him.

I am reminded today that, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.'
(Westminster Shorter Catechism)*

*https://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html

I consider how I can take time today to simply know and enjoy God's presence.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I see all the ways that it can be easy to work for you without spending time with You. I repent today of the ways I have tried to keep up a good appearance without guarding my intimacy with You. I ask that you would restore my first love for You today.

Yielding Promise

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

You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.'

Acts 2:28

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.

August 27 2021 (click for audio)

Peace from Obedience

Today is Friday the 27th of August. This week we are exploring the shalom presence and peace of God, with an invitation to find peace in obedience to God's law.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's strength today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 28...

Praise the Lord!

For he has heard my cry for mercy.

The Lord is my strength and shield.

I trust him with all my heart.

He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.

I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

The Lord gives his people strength.

Psalm 28:6-8a

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on part of the longest Psalm in Scripture, a poem likely written by David, that speaks of the great beauty and wholeness we find in the Word of God...

*Great peace have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble.*

*I wait for your salvation, Lord,
and I follow your commands.*

*I obey your statutes,
for I love them greatly.*

*I obey your precepts and your statutes,
for all my ways are known to you.*

Psalm 119:165-168

In a book called *The Fault in Our Stars*, John Green writes: 'Some tourists think Amsterdam is a city of sin, but in truth it is a city of freedom. And in freedom, most people find sin.' *

*John Green, *The Fault In our Stars* (New York: Penguin, 2013), p157

I think of the way I and my culture are hungry for freedom, and how I am tempted to live for my own pleasure and desires. In contrast, the Psalmist writes here about the great peace and freedom we can find when we know and love the instruction of God. True freedom calls me to true obedience. In freedom, I am invited to follow the God who loves me enough to make all of his ways known to me.

Ask

Father, I thank You that You know all of my ways and my thoughts even before I think them. I pray You would give me a greater love for Your word, a greater trust to wait for Your salvation, and a deeper desire for genuine obedience to You. I pause now and ask You to fill me with Your shalom; Your life-giving joy and freedom. Strengthen my heart to follow You today.

Pause and pray

I pray for those who have experienced Your law as old, cold, dead, or boring. I name someone I know and I ask You to revive your healing word in their life 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.

*Great peace have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble.
I wait for your salvation, Lord,
and I follow your commands.
I obey your statutes,
for I love them greatly.
I obey your precepts and your statutes,
for all my ways are known to you.
Psalm 119:165-168*

I wait.

I follow.

I obey.

I love.

The Psalmist speaks so personally, intimately, and tenderly of his relationship with God's law. I think about the ways that I can be frustrated by the limitations of the law, confused by the language of the Bible, or try to carry the burden of the law.

I thank God for the work of Jesus, who carried the full weight of the law on my behalf, and for His life, death, and resurrection which give me true freedom.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I pray that You would teach me how to speak of the radiant story of your love today.

I repent of any places I have doubted Your goodness and your kindness.

I pray You would show me how to live a life of beautiful truth.

Yielding Promise

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

[God] is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son

[Jesus] and forgave our sins.

Ephesians 1:7 (NLT)

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.

August 28 2021 (click for audio)

Augustine of Hippo: Hero of Learning

Today is Saturday the 28th of August and today we are pausing our usual rhythm to celebrate the feast day and life of Augustine of Hippo. On feast days, we pause 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, which are Prayer, Creativity, Justice, Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today, therefore, we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Augustine of Hippo, a hero 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, would You awaken my heart, expand my mind and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's abundant goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 62...

*Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.*

*He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.*

...trust in him at all times.

*Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge.*

Psalm 62:5-6,8

Pause and pray

Augustine was born on the 13th of November, in the year 354. The only member of his family to be educated, he devoted much of his early life to learning and studying. At the age of 31 he converted to Christianity after reading about the life of the Christian monk, Anthony of the Desert. A keen and influential man of faith, in 391 he was made Bishop of Hippo, in North Africa.

Augustine's education and intellect meant that he became widely known as a theologian and philosopher, whose writings later influenced the development of the Western Church. His book, *Confessions*, is widely seen as the first recorded spiritual memoir in which Augustine reflects on the meaning of his life and relationship with God.

I reflect now on an excerpt from *Confessions*...

*'Late have I loved Thee, O Lord; and behold,
Thou wast within and I without, and there I sought Thee.
Thou wast with me when I was not with Thee.
Thou didst call, and cry, and burst my deafness.
Thou didst gleam, and glow, and dispel my blindness.
Thou didst touch me, and I burned for Thy peace.
For Thyself Thou hast made us,
And restless our hearts until in Thee they find their ease.
Late have I loved Thee, Thou Beauty ever old and ever new.'* *

**Augustine of Hippo, Book 10: Chapter XXVII, The Confessions of St Augustine*

In his younger years, Augustine had a restless heart that manifested in a reckless life. One of his famous and brutally honest prayers was "Give me chastity... only not yet"! ** Yet in spite of his restlessness, his recklessness, and his reticence to turn to God, his testimony is that God pursued him, and made him his own.

***Augustine of Hippo, Book 8, The Confessions of St Augustine*

Ask

What would it look like for me to live today in the knowledge that God is with me and calls me His own? How does this reality affect the way I see myself and the things I am walking into?

God, like Augustine, may I hear your call and cry. May I see your gleam and glow. May I feel your touch and may I burn for Your peace. I ask that I would seek and I would find you.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for friends of mine who have restless hearts, who haven't yet realized that it's You they're seeking. I name them before You in the silence, and ask that You will pursue them and reveal Yourself to them, today.

Pause and pray

Yield

Augustine's *Confessions* was written during his early 40s and is part memoir, part theological reflection, part devotion. It is the most complete record of any single person from the 4th and 5th Centuries, giving insight into the first 33 years of his life. This personal journal has enriched the spiritual lives of millions and shaped the thinking of generations.

Do I journal? What benefit might there be for me, and even for others, if I begin to write down my own story, my own theological reflections, my own prayers and devotion?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I give You my story, today. I ask that You would make me a living letter, written by the Spirit of God, and that my life's story would glorify You.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day I am encouraged and spurred on by God's words in Jeremiah:

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Jeremiah 31:3-4

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.

August 29 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is sundasy the 29th of August, and today we pause our normal rhythm and return again to pray our Shalom Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about *shalom and learning*. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask for the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7, NIVUK)

Pause and pray

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"Lord, save me!"
The Lord is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.
The Lord protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return to your rest, my soul,
for the Lord has been good to you.
Psalm 116:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

In his book, 'Sabbath as Resistance', Walter Brueggemann says: 'I have come to think that the fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity -propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment, bread and circuses ... along with anxiety and violence... Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.'*

* Walter Brueggemann, Sabbath as Resistance

Pause

God of rest, I opt for You and I align myself with You today. Give me the quiet strength to defy control and anxiety, maybe even entertainment too, and instead help me to fully enter rest. I trust You, and I welcome Your presence and Your peace – Your Shalom - today.

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will have their 'feet fitted with readiness' to preach the gospel of peace (Ephesians 5:16 NIVUK). And I pray that those who listen will have open ears and hearts, so that many will be saved and made whole today.

Jesus, I pray especially for children and young people in church today who need You to be their Prince of Peace. Those who secretly feel alone. Those who are struggling with anxiety and fear. May Your peace be with them, Jesus.

And Holy Spirit, breathe upon us today. Inspire parents and politicians, artists and journalists, health workers and bar workers in church today. Enable us all to bring peace to the places where we are, so that we 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 practicing peace-making in simple ways in their home, their school or their workplace.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

John 20:21-22

I receive the promise and the commissioning in these words, and I pause for a moment now to receive the Holy Spirit.

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

August 30 2021 (click for audio)

Shalom for the Nations

Today is Monday the 30th of August, and this week we are coming to the end of our Lectio 365 series exploring the Hebrew idea of shalom. Over recent weeks we have looked at how shalom intersects with prayer, mission, justice, hospitality and learning. This week we are exploring shalom and creativity: God's vision for creation at peace.

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 Shalom, I offer You my worries, I bring You my brokenness and I surrender my striving. As I rest in Your presence, I receive Your peace.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's unshakable protection today, joining with 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.
Psalm 46:1-2*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a world-changing vision of peace for all nations...

*Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolation he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.'
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Psalm 46:8-11*

This Psalm paints a vivid picture of God enforcing peace between nations. It describes decisive intervention by a God who lays waste to the weapons of war. If it were composed today it might read, 'He breaks the assault rifles and shatters the drones; he burns weapons of mass destruction with fire.'

The God who creates life destroys the tools of death.

Ask

Tools of death are being used all over the world today. According to Wikipedia there are 19 wars happening right now, which have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths in the past year alone.* I choose just one of these conflicts, and even if my prayers feel simple and inadequate I say...

God of Shalom, end this war – bring Your justice and peace to the nations.

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_armed_conflicts

Pause and pray

The United Nations Refugee Agency reports that today, '1 in every 95 people on earth has fled their home as a result of conflict or persecution'.** In the past few weeks alone, thousands of people have fled from the country of Afghanistan.

**<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

God of Shalom, I pray for those who have been forced to flee from their nation, to seek safety in another. Help them find a home, a community and Your healing peace.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I ask You, Spirit, to speak to me through a word or phrase...

*Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolation he has brought on the earth.*

*He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.*

*He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.*

*He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.'*

*The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Psalm 46:8-11

In the midst of all the imagery of war is a moment of unexpected stillness. The nations of the earth are commanded to stop their struggle for power and victory, and 'be still'. Or as Eugene Peterson puts it, to, 'Take a long, loving look at [the]...High God, above politics, above everything.' (Psalm 46:10 MSG)

There is but one 'superpower' in all creation. One sovereign, exalted over all, and His agenda is to bring shalom; peace to the nations.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I want to know God deeply. The author David G Benner once wrote that, '...silence is a precondition to deep knowing of God.' ***

***David G Benner, Opening to God, p49

So I pause now, I breathe deeply (again). I still my body, silence my mind and open my heart. I focus my attention on You, the Lord Almighty.

Yielding Promise

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

*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
Philippians 2:9-10*

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.

August 31 2021 (click for audio)

Aiden of Lindisfarne, Hero of Mission

Today is Tuesday the 31st of August, Feast of Aiden of Lindisfarne who died on this day in 651.

On Feast Days we pause from our usual rhythm 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 Aidan, a generous hero of 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 rescue and restoration, thank You for Your great and beautiful mission in the world. Here I am Lord, fill me with Your Spirit and send me.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's provision today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 16...

*I said to the Lord, "You are my Master!
Every good thing I have comes from you."
You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.
Psalm 16:2,11 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Irish-born Aidan was a monk on the island of Iona, Scotland. However in 635, the King of Northumbria, Oswald, invited him to establish a new community of Christians on a tidal island that later became known as Lindisfarne, or simply, Holy Island.

Although based on the island, Aidan would frequently travel to the mainland to spend time with, and share the gospel with local residents. He was known for his simple lifestyle and had few possessions.

Aidan enjoyed a close relationship with King Oswald, and following his death, Oswald's cousin Oswin, who inherited part of the Kingdom. On one occasion, Oswin announced that he had a gift for the community and presented Aidan with his best horse, saddle and harness. Aidan thanked the King for his kindness but equally, was uncertain about receiving such a valuable gift.

Riding his new horse into the local town, Aidan came across a local beggar. He climbed down and began to offer the man kindness and a blessing. Then he realized that he couldn't hold onto such a valuable possession when those around him had nothing. He took the horse's reins and, I imagine with a smile on his face, handed them to the beggar.

On his next encounter with Oswin, he had to explain to his friend why he had given away such a precious gift.

After hearing the King's outcry to his gesture, Aidan simply said,

'My King, my good friend. Is that son of a mare more dear to you than that son of God?'

*Scot Bower, Saints (2009) p91

Ask

What are the things that God has blessed me with? Do I hold tightly onto them for myself, or am I willing, like Aidan, to loosen my grip and to give generously so that others might see God's heart?

God, as I spend this time with You, help me to open my hands a little wider. How can I practice such generosity that I might lead others to You this week?

Pause and pray

Who in my community, my family or Church is an example of generosity in the way that they live? How could I serve them today and thank them for their kindness?

Lord, I take time to pray for them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

Aidan was the first Bishop of Lindisfarne, pioneering and championing a brand new community on the island. However, his life was just the beginning of the story of the island. After his death, a young man named Cuthbert continued his legacy and example to the people of Northumbria.

The simple devotion of Aidan to live generously and serve others led many to find Jesus. And the Holy Island of Lindisfarne remains a powerful place of encounter for Christian pilgrims today.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I'm sorry when I've been so focused on what I need in the present that I forget to focus on how I can impact others in the future. Today, help me to live outside of my comfort zone, I yield all I possess to You. Show me who I can generously serve and bless.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in 2 Corinthians

... he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.

2 Cor 9:10-11

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.