

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

Nov 2021

Nov 1	Nov 2	Nov 3	Nov 4
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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

[Month of Nov 2021](#)

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November 01 2021 (click for audio)

The Precious Cosmos

Today is Monday the 1st of November. This week we reflect on God's call to care for the world and pray together for the UN climate talks (called COP26) currently taking place in Glasgow.

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 68...

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth.

Sing praises to the Lord.

*Sing to the one who rides across the ancient heavens,
his mighty voice thundering from the sky.*

Tell everyone about God's power.

*His majesty shines down on Israel;
his strength is mighty in the heavens.*

God is awesome in his sanctuary.

The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.

Praise be to God!

Psalm 68:32-35

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on Paul's magnificent words to the Christians in Colossae, where he sets out a powerful picture of Jesus, Lord of all creation...

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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 1:15-20

What a stunning description this is of Jesus the Son of God; one that lifts my eyes to consider Jesus' relationship to the cosmos – the whole created order. All things have been made in him and by him and for him, and are therefore deeply precious to him.

The climate change talks that start today aren't something that I can ignore or say are irrelevant to my Christian faith: the negotiations and agreements made at COP26 will impact – for good or for bad – that with which our Lord Jesus is intimately connected.

Ask

Lord, I am amazed when I consider that the created order has been made in and for You; this whole cosmos finds its meaning and purpose in You! Take the scales from my eyes, expand my vision of who You are, and help me to see the world as You do.

Pause and pray

The world leaders gathered at COP26 bear immense responsibility for this world that is so loved by God.

I pray for them now. May they have humble and wise hearts as the negotiations Begin.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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 1:15-20

This is some declaration: Jesus' blood shed on the cross has brought about the reconciliation of all things to God! I too often narrow salvation down to being only about people and forget the wider view of reconciliation we are given in the Bible.

My Christian faith is not about escaping from the wider creation, but about discovering God's purposes for all that he has made, and then joyfully joining in.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord of All Creation, as COP26 gets underway, I recognize I also share responsibility for this world for which you died. May I be humble and wise in my actions and decisions.

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 John:

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

[November 02 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

The Land Mourns

Today is Tuesday the 2nd of November. This week we reflect on God's call to care for the world and pray together for the UN climate talks (called COP26) currently taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's forgiveness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 32...

*Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!...
Finally, I confessed all my sins to you
and stopped trying to hide my guilt
I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord."
And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.
Psalm 32: 1-2, 5*

Pause and pray

In liturgy and prayer, the Church often starts by coming to God in confession: acknowledging what we have done wrong, asking God to forgive us and preparing our hearts to hear from him. Today I take time to do this in light of the unfolding climate crisis...

*Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:*

*“There is no faithfulness, no love,
no acknowledgment of God in the land.
There is only cursing, lying and murder,
stealing and adultery;
they break all bounds,
and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Because of this the land dries up,
and all who live in it waste away;
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea are swept away.
Hosea 4:1-3*

I find these verses incredibly hard to read and listen to. But Hosea is uncompromising and, though spoken thousands of years ago, his words speak loudly to me today. I see that my relationship with God is directly bound up with how I treat other people, and that sin has environmental consequences.

Ask

I pause to consider where I see that link between sin and environmental breakdown.

I can easily identify it in the greed of those who cling to their wealth, in the destructive activities of big corporations and in the self-serving interests of governments. But can I look at myself and acknowledge where I have been complicit?

Pause and pray

*Holy Spirit, break into the hearts of the heads of state and government ministers meeting today. Cause repentance to well up in them which will lead to ambition and action to keep world temperatures within 1.5° of warming.**

* <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

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.

*Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:
“There is no faithfulness, no love,
no acknowledgment of God in the land.
There is only cursing, lying and murder,
stealing and adultery;
they break all bounds,*

*and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Because of this the land dries up,
and all who live in it waste away;
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea are swept away.
Hosea 4:1-3*

Verse three of this passage says, ‘the land dries up’, but a more literal translation is, ‘the land mourns’.

I want to ignore the pain of this, distract myself with the beauty of the natural world and jump straight into language about hope. But the Bible shows me that mourning and lament are integral parts of my walk with Jesus. I am challenged to stop and mourn with the land; to let God break my heart for what he has created, and stir me to action.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I draw the themes of this challenging devotional together in the words of John Greenleaf Whittier’s well-known hymn:

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise. ***

** [https://hymnary.org/text/dear lord and father of mankind](https://hymnary.org/text/dear_lord_and_father_of_mankind)

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 John...

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9*

Closing Prayer

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

November 03 2021 (click for audio)

Earth's Abundant Beauty

Today is Wednesday the 3rd of November. This week we reflect on God's call to care for the world and pray together for the UN climate talks (called COP26) currently taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's abundant generosity today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 65...

*Those who live at the ends of the earth
stand in awe of your wonders.
From where the sun rises to where it sets,
you inspire shouts of joy.
You take care of the earth and water it,
making it rich and fertile.
The river of God has plenty of water;
it provides a bountiful harvest of grain,
for you have ordered it so...
The grasslands of the wilderness become a lush pasture,
and the hillsides blossom with joy.
Psalm 65:8-9,12*

Pause and pray

I spent yesterday on my knees in confession and lament. Today, I lift up my eyes to look out on the wonder and beauty of God's creation...

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the

earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1: 20-24

I marvel today at the fabulous abundance of God’s world, with its color, vibrancy and diversity.

I bring to mind some of the beautiful and extraordinary creatures that God has made, some of which I may only have seen on TV, others of which share my home and garden.

I picture places I have been to that have inspired awe and a sense of God’s presence.

Ask

As poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, ‘The world is charged with the grandeur of God; It will flame out, like shining from shook foil’.*

*<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur>

As I reflect on this teeming world of abundance – its creatures and places – what would I like to say to the Lord of all creation?

Pause and pray

Glasgow, the COP26 host city, is known as the ‘Dear Green Place’ in the Gaelic language.

I lift those involved to you now, God. Remind them today that protecting and restoring our world must be a priority for climate Action

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 God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1: 20-24

God wants his creatures to teem – be fruitful and increase – but our actions are decimating them and going against God’s desires.

The climate crisis is a key factor in the terrifying loss of biodiversity that we are witnessing. This summer’s unprecedented heatwave in Canada resulted in the death of a billion marine animals.**

** <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/08/heat-dome-canada-pacific-northwest-animal-deaths>

Hard as it is, I pause here to acknowledge the horror and bring the unfolding tragedy to God.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, may my life enable the wider natural world to sing Your praises. I pray the words of this wonderful hymn by William Draper, based on St Francis of Assisi’s poem:

*All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!****

***https://hymnary.org/text/all_creatures_of_our_god_and_king

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 Chronicles...

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face
and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and
will heal their land.
2 Chronicles 7:14*

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.

November 04 2021 (click for audio)

Lifting the Needy

Today is Thursday the 4th of November. This week we are reflecting on God's call to care for His world as we come together to pray for the UN Climate Change talks (called COP26) taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*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.
Psalm 146:5-7*

Pause and pray

Today I continue to consider the impact of the climate crisis on God's creation, turning my thoughts to people living in poverty...

*The Lord is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,
who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust*

*and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.
He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the Lord.
Psalm 113:4-9*

This Psalm celebrates the vast majesty of God, exalted and glorious; definitely a God to be worshiped. But I am humbled by the one characteristic of God that is highlighted above all others: our mighty God is one who raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

As part of God's people, I am called to follow God in focusing my life on serving those who are poor and in need.

Ask

I open myself to feel God's stirring in me for people facing injustice and poverty. I bring to God particular issues, geographical areas or people that he has laid on my heart.

Pause and pray

World leaders are negotiating today on a global transition to clean energy, so I pray for God's courage to be with them.

*God of Justice, may the impact on – and voices of – the world's poorest be central in all decision-making at COP26. Empower the leaders to be bold in making decisions that will get the world on track for the safer level of 1.5 degrees of warming.**

**<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>*

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*The Lord is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,
who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes,*

*with the princes of his people.
He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the Lord.
Psalm 113:4-9*

As the world warms, droughts, floods, fires and storms are becoming more frequent and more extreme. God desires to lift the poor from the dust, yet, though climate change affects us all, it's hitting people living in poverty globally first and hardest.

This is an issue of justice; the poorest 3.5 billion people are responsible for just ten percent of emissions** and yet they are being pushed back into the dust and the ash heaps.

**<https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/the-worlds-richest-people-also-emit-the-most-carbon>

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I commit to partnering with You in seeing people living in poverty lifted out of the ashes. Please show me what I can do.

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...

*If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
Isaiah 58: 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.

November 05 2021 (click for audio)

Prayerful Activism

Today is Friday the 5th of November. This week we are reflecting on God's call to us to be caring for his world as we come together to pray for the UN Climate Change talks (called COP26) taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*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.

Psalm 146:5-7

Pause and pray

Today I continue to consider the impact of the climate crisis on God's creation, turning my thoughts to people living in poverty...

*The Lord is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.*

*Who is like the Lord our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,*

*who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?*

He raises the poor from the dust

*and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.
He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the Lord.
Psalm 113:4-9*

This Psalm celebrates the vast majesty of God, exalted and glorious; definitely a God to be worshiped. But I am humbled by the one characteristic of God that is highlighted above all others: our mighty God is one who raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

As part of God's people, I am called to follow God in focusing my life on serving those who are poor and in need.

Ask

I open myself to feel God's stirring in me for people facing injustice and poverty. I bring to God particular issues, geographical areas or people that he has laid on my heart.

Pause and pray

World leaders are negotiating today on a global transition to clean energy, so I pray for God's courage to be with them.

*God of Justice, may the impact on – and voices of – the world's poorest be central in all decision-making at COP26. Empower the leaders to be bold in making decisions that will get the world on track for the safer level of 1.5 degrees of warming**

**<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>*

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*The Lord is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,
who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes,*

*with the princes of his people.
He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the Lord.
Psalm 113:4-9*

As the world warms, droughts, floods, fires and storms are becoming more frequent and more extreme. God desires to lift the poor from the dust, yet, though climate change affects us all, it's hitting people living in poverty globally first and hardest.

This is an issue of justice; the poorest 3.5 billion people are responsible for just ten percent of emissions** and yet they are being pushed back into the dust and the ash heaps.

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Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

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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...

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and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
Isaiah 58: 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.

November 06 2021 (click for audio)

A Whole-Life Response

Today is Saturday the 6th of November. This week we are reflecting on god's call to us to be caring for his world as we come together to pray for the UN Climate Change talks (called COP26) taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.

If you would like to know more about the themes we've been exploring this week then you may want to explore 24-7 Prayer and Tearfund's resource - How to Pray for Climate Change*

*<https://www.24-7prayer.com/downloads/Pray-for-the-Climate-Resource-247Prayer-Renew-our-World-1.pdf>

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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's generous provision today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 147...

*Sing to the Lord with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.
He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.
He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call...
the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.
Psalm 147: 7-9, 11*

Pause and pray

This week has been challenging as I have prayed for world leaders and reflected on the climate crisis from the perspective of my Christian faith. I have committed to responding in prayer and speaking out. Today, I think further about my response as I reflect on part of a letter that the apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth...

But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you - see that you also excel in this grace of giving. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

2 Corinthians 8: 7, 13-15

Extreme inequality is a terrible blight on our national and global landscapes, and an affront to God who made all people equal in his image. The Coronavirus pandemic has only made matters worse; for the first time in history, inequality looks set to increase in every country at the same time.

But God loves a cheerful giver and those of us who have much can receive the grace of giving to help those who do not have enough.

Ask

Whether I have much or little, how generous am I with my money? Is there more I could do to support those working to protect God’s world and tackle inequality?

If I am struggling financially, is there someone in my church community I could go to for help?

Pause and pray

I pray for the financial decision makers at COP26 who hold the keys to funding the big changes we need in society to reduce emissions. I pray for delivery of the much-promised climate finance needed to help poorer nations cope with the climate crisis.

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.

But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you - see that you also excel in this grace of giving. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

2 Corinthians 8: 7, 13-15

This passage isn’t just about a one-off financial gift; it speaks to a broader lifestyle that leads to what is called ‘a fair balance’ in one translation (2 Cor 8:14 NRSV).

I am all-too aware that I consume more than my fair share of the earth’s resources through the food choices I make, the way I travel and the energy I use at home, amongst other things. A key part of my response to climate change is choosing to live differently.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Loving God – though the situation is desperate, I refuse to yield to despair. I take Your light into the world by speaking out, by giving, and by taking action.

Yielding Promise

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

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

*‘Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.’*

Hebrews 13:5

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

November 07 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 7th of November, a day of rest on which we interrupt our usual daily pattern with a shorter, simpler time of prayer. At the end of this week, thinking about the huge impact of climate change on our world, it's easy to feel the weight and responsibility of how to solve this crisis.

But, today, I pause and receive again God's grace and mercy.

'Are you tired?' Asks Jesus, 'Are you worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

Pause and pray

*'Sabbath is an expression of faith. Faith that there is a Creator and he's good...' says John Mark Comer. 'So on the Sabbath, we don't just take a day off from work; we take a day off from toil. We give him all our fear and anxiety and stress and worry.'**

**John Mark Comer, Garden City: Work, Rest and the Art of Being Human, 2015*

Lord, I come to You and rest today. I give You all of my fear, anxiety, stress and worry for the world that we live in. I look to You, Lord of All Creation and acknowledge that You are good.

I take a moment now to pray for those who are currently experiencing the impacts of climate change on our world, and invite God's goodness, justice and mercy to reign.

Pause and pray

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

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

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-stored.

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

November 08 2021 (click for audio)

Jesus, Go Away

Today is Monday the 8th of November and this week we are beginning our second series following the life of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's deliverance today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 118...

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord,
and the Lord answered me and set me free.
The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear.
What can mere people do to me?
Yes, the Lord is for me; he will help me.
I will look in triumph at those who hate me.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in people.
Psalm 118:5-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

When Jesus met a man with many demons, he set the man free and sent the demons into a herd of pigs. The pigs immediately rushed into a lake and drowned. Today I am reflecting on what happened after this strange event...

*Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.
Mark 5:16-20 (NIVUK)*

I wonder why the people begged Jesus to go away?

Maybe part of the reason is because they'd become familiar with the demonized man and his disturbing behavior? He'd become part of their community life, a part of what they expected each day. So when Jesus set the man free, He'd changed everything.

Sometimes the unknown that freedom and change brings is scarier than what I know; even when what I know is suffering and struggle.

Ask

Is there an area of my life where I have been asking Jesus to go away (even if I've never quite said it out loud)? Where I've been keeping Jesus at a distance, so that things don't change too much?

I take a few moments to talk with Jesus about this.

Pause and pray

I think of those, perhaps someone I know, who seem to be trapped in patterns of self-destructive behavior, like the man in this story.

Lord Jesus, I ask You to deliver them. Set them free, so they can know You and follow You.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.
Mark 5:16-20 (NIV UK)

Jesus says 'yes' to the people who begged him to go away, and 'no' to the man who asked to follow Him.

Jesus sent him back to his own people – to those who knew him – to tell and show what Jesus had done for him. And the people were amazed!

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, this won't come as a surprise to You; but change often unsettles me. I get scared about how it will affect me. But I know that You love me, and I know that everything You do in and with me is for my good. So today, once again, I surrender to You. I invite You to disturb my life.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Jeremiah 29 that:

God has plans for good and not for disaster, to give me a future and a hope.
Jeremiah 29:11 (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.

November 09 2021 (click for audio)

Jesus, Come and Help

Today is Tuesday the 9th of November and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark and listen for His invitation: Come Follow Me.

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

Jesus, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s help and healing today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 107...

*“Lord, help!” they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
He sent out his word and healed them,
snatching them from the door of death.
Let them praise the Lord for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and sing joyfully about his glorious acts.
Psalm 107:19-22 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I’m reflecting on what happened after Jesus set a man with many demons free. The local people were disturbed by this and they begged Him to leave. So Jesus got into a boat and set off...

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered round him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and

live.’ So Jesus went with him.

Mark 5:21-24a (NIV UK)

Not every religious leader was against Jesus.

Jairus was a leader in the synagogue, but he was willing to risk his reputation, his social standing, even his dignity when he saw the crowds gathered around Jesus. Jairus fell at Jesus’ feet – he fell onto the dusty road in front of everyone - and begged Jesus to save his daughter’s life.

Ask

I have to admit that I sometimes judge those with power and authority. I forget their humanity, that they hurt and hope, just like me.

Heavenly Father, forgive me for my judgmental attitudes. I ask You to bring someone to my mind now – a leader; a celebrity; someone I have never considered praying for before - and I pray my best prayer for them now.

Pause and pray

Jairus begged Jesus to come and heal his daughter because she was dying. Who do I know that isn’t well; maybe someone suffering with Covid-19 or some other sickness?

Lord Jesus, I ask You to put Your hands on them so they will be healed and live.

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 Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered round him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.’ So Jesus went with him.

Mark 5:21-24a (NIV UK)

In Luke’s account of this story, he mentions that Jairus’s daughter is 12 years old. This age is significant in Hebrew culture because it marks her transition from childhood to adulthood. Jairus is doing all he can as his daughter’s champion during a season of significant change.

Is there a young person in my family or my church community who God wants me to champion in prayer during this season?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, You welcome everyone. Those who are young, and those who are less young. Those who own much and those who own little. Those of every color and culture, You made them all. I yield my petty prejudices, and I ask You to give me eyes to see the glory of Your image in everyone.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Galatians 3 that:

*In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. [We] are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.
Galatians 3:28-29a (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.

November 10 2021 (click for audio)

Jesus, Heal Me

Today is Wednesday the 10th of November, and this week we are praying through the life of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's loving kindness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 27...

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."

And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."

Do not turn your back on me.

Do not reject your servant in anger.

You have always been my helper.

Don't leave me now; don't abandon me,

O God of my salvation!

Even if my father and mother abandon me,

the Lord will hold me close.

Psalm 27:8-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I am continuing to reflect on the story of Jairus, the synagogue ruler, who asked Jesus to come and heal his daughter. Jesus agreed and set off with Jairus. However, he got interrupted...

A large crowd followed and pressed round him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Mark 5:24b-29 (NIV UK)

For twelve years, this poor woman had been bleeding. Doctors had treated her, and treated her badly, leaving her even worse off. But it wasn't just the physical pain and discomfort that she suffered with – it was the shame and the loneliness too.

According to Hebrew law, anyone who touched this woman would be unclean (Leviticus 15:27), which is one of the reasons why this miracle went against everything that the Israelites believed. Instead of being 'infected' by her uncleanness, Jesus 'infected' her with his wholeness.

Ask

In the quiet, I invite the Holy Spirit to search my heart. Are there people who I label 'unclean', people who I would be reluctant to reach out to?

Loving Father, forgive me. I ask You to fill me with compassion, especially for those who are suffering.

Pause and pray

Sadly, there are many people who believe that they are unacceptable to God because of who they are or what's happened to them.

Lord Jesus, I ask You to draw near to them. Please give them the courage to reach out and touch You, just like the woman in this story. And may they too experience the power of Your love for Them.

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.

A large crowd followed and pressed round him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Mark 5:24b-29 (NIV UK)

I imagine the crowd surrounding Jesus as He walks along the dusty road, pushing and pulling, trying to get closer. I hear the noise, people calling His name, crying, shouting. And I imagine diving through the forest of legs, people kicking and tripping over me.

I see Jesus' cloak just in front of me, and I reach out: what miracle am I hoping for?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You're never too busy or too preoccupied. You yield to every interruption, especially when people are in need. I want to be more like You, more available. I say Yes to You and to whatever You have planned 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 2 Corinthians that:

God is my merciful Father and the source of all comfort. God comforts me in all my troubles so that I can comfort others.

2 Corinthians 1:3b-4a (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.

November 11 2021 (click for audio)

Armistice Day

Today is Thursday the 11th of November, which is known in many nations as Armistice Day. On this day we are interrupting our usual rhythm to remember those who lost their lives during the First World War, to give thanks for peace, and also to pray for those who are currently living through conflict.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Your eternal word, O Lord,
stands firm in heaven.
Your faithfulness extends to every generation,
as enduring as the earth you created.
Psalm 119:89-90 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

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

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

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

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

*'If we have never sought, we seek Thee now;
Thine eyes burn through the dark, our only stars;
We must have sight of thorn-pricks on Thy brow,
We must have Thee, O Jesus of the Scars.
The heavens frighten us; they are too calm;
In all the universe we have no place.
Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm?
Lord Jesus, by Thy Scars, we claim Thy grace.
If, when the doors are shut, Thou drawest near,
Only reveal those hands, that side of Thine;
We know to-day what wounds are, have no fear,
Show us Thy Scars, we know the countersign.
The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.'* *

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

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

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

Ask

Thank you, God, that You are not a stranger to my pain, nor the pain of the world.

Jesus, I receive once again the healing that You bought for me on the cross.

Pause and pray

Joining with others all over the world who will be pausing today, I take a minute's silence now to remember those who lost their lives during World War One and other wars and conflicts.

Pause and pray

So much of the world is suffering right now. What wars and current conflicts am I aware of?

Heavenly Father, as I name these places before You now, I ask You to bring healing to the nations.

Pause and pray

Yield

Yielding Prayer

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

Yielding Promise

As I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John's Gospel...

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 (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.

November 12 2021 (click for audio)

Jesus, See Me

Today is Friday the 12th of November, and this week we are returning to the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 31...

*How great is the goodness
you have stored up for those who fear you.
You lavish it on those who come to you for protection,
blessing them before the watching world.
You hide them in the shelter of your presence,
safe from those who conspire against them.
You shelter them in your presence,
far from accusing tongues.
Praise the Lord,
for he has shown me the wonders of his unfailing love.
Psalm 31: 19-21a (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am continuing to reflect on Jesus' interaction with the woman who was healed when she reached through the crowd and touched his cloak. Some have called this passage in Mark's Gospel, 'the tale of two daughters'...

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned round in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?'
'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched me?"'
But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had

happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'
Mark 5:30-34 (NIV UK)

Jairus came to Jesus on behalf of his 12-year-old daughter. Jairus was her advocate, her champion, and he asked Jesus to come and heal her. The woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, however, had no advocate, no champion, no-one to call her 'daughter'.

And then Jesus said it... 'Daughter.'

This is the only woman in the Bible that Jesus called daughter. And with that one word, Jesus named her as His own. 'You are mine,' He said, 'and I am yours.'

Ask

I close my eyes for a moment and imagine reaching out to touch Jesus. He turns towards me and I see the smile on His face, as He says my name.

'Son. Daughter. I see you, you are mine and I am yours.'

Pause and pray

Who comes to mind when I hear those phrases, 'no advocate, no champion'? Maybe it's someone I know, or maybe it's a group of people who are marginalized in some way?

Father God, I name them before You. I want them to know that they are Yours and You are theirs Too.

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.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned round in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?'

'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, "Who touched me?"'

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'
Mark 5:30-34 (NIV UK)

'Who touched my clothes?' Jesus asked, to the bewilderment of His disciples.

'Everyone is touching your clothes!' they replied. But what Jesus meant was, 'Who touched me *with intent?*'

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, my faith fluctuates more than I'd like to admit, even to myself. Sometimes, I feel full of faith and my prayers are confident. And other times, I feel like I'm doubting everything. I yield to You, I pray with intent, 'I believe, help my unbelief' (Mark 9:24, NIVUK).

Yielding Promise

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

*If [I] have faith and don't doubt, [I] can do things like this and much more. [I] can even say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen.
Matthew 21:21 (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.

November 13 2021 (click for audio)

Jesus, I Believe

Today is Saturday the 13th of November, and this is the last day this week that we will be exploring the life of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
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 73:24-26 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, for the final time, I am reflecting on the wonderful 'tale of two daughters' found in Mark's Gospel. While on his way to Jairus's house, Jesus had stopped to heal a woman who had been bleeding for many years.

*While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher anymore?'
Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'
He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.'
Mark 5:35-39 (NIVUK)*

As he watched Jesus heal the woman who had been bleeding for many years, Jairus must've been full of faith that Jesus could also heal his sick daughter. Until, that is, the people from his household arrived with their terrible news. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said, 'there's no need for Jesus any more.'

Perhaps sensing Jairus's fear, Jesus turned to him and said, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.' I like the way that Eugene Peterson paraphrases this in The Message: 'Don't listen to them. Just trust me.' (Mark 5:36 MSG)

Ask

What have I been hoping for or holding on for, perhaps for a long time? What might Jesus be saying to me about it? Is it time to let it go? Or is Jesus saying, 'Don't be afraid, just believe. Trust me'?

Pause and pray

As I think about the news reports that I have heard or seen over the last few days, what feels hopeless?

Lord Jesus, I choose not to be afraid. I choose to believe, and to trust You. Guide me and give me faith as I intercede for this situation 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.

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher anymore?'

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.'

Mark 5:35-39 (NIV UK)

'The child is not dead but asleep.' When Jesus said this, it's likely that he was simply setting the scene for the miracle that he was about to perform. There is, however, a deeper, glorious truth hidden in these words that points towards a future hope.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, 'We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.' (1 Thess 4:13-14, CSB)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Loving God, I'm not afraid to admit that I am afraid of death: the suffering, the sense of ending, the loss of those I love. And yet You call it sleep, a brief sleep that I will awaken from into life in all its fullness. And so I yield all my fears, and I put my trust fully in 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 John's Gospel:

*'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.
Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.'*
John 11:25-26a (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.

November 14 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 14th of November and like every Sunday we take a break from our usual rhythm of Pausing, Rejoicing and Reflecting, Asking and Yielding to pray the Bible and embrace a day of rest.

Eugene Peterson describes Sabbath as 'a time to receive silence and let it deepen into gratitude'.*

*Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant*, p.82

And so, on this day of rest, as I prepare to pray, I settle into silence and allow thankfulness to bubble up Inside

Pause and Pray

A prayer of contentment from Psalm 131:

*My heart is not proud, Lord,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quietened myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and for evermore.
Psalm 131 (NIV UK)*

In the silence of this moment, I express my deep gratitude for the Church:

Father, thank You for Your beautiful, multicultural, intergenerational family, gathering today in so many countries. Revive and sanctify us, I pray. Make us a house of prayer for all nations. And set our hearts on fire again with the good news of Your gospel.

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers locally by naming members of my own church, and friends who are finding life particularly tough.

Pause and pray

I dedicate the coming week to Jesus:

*Thank You, Father, for loving me with all Your heart, all Your soul and all Your mind.
Inspire me this week to love You more with all of mine.*

*Thank You, Jesus, for Your faithful and sacrificial friendship.
Help me this week to be a faithful and sacrificial friend like You.*

*Thank You, Holy Spirit, for listening to my many thoughts and words and dreams.
Still my soul this week to listen much more carefully to yours*

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

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

November 15 2021 (click for audio)

Jan Amos Comenius: Hero of Learning

Today is Monday the 15th of November, Feast of the educator Jan Amos Comenius who died on this day in 1670.

On Feast Days we pause from praying the Bible to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Jan Amos Comenius, 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 unfailing love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 92...

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to the Most High.
It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning,
your faithfulness in the evening...
You thrill me, Lord, with all you have done for me!
I sing for joy because of what you have done.
O Lord, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts...
The godly will flourish like palm trees
and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon.
For they are transplanted to the Lord's own house.
They flourish in the courts of our God.
Psalm 92:1-2, 4, 12-13 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Philosopher, educator and Moravian bishop Jan Amos Comenius, is considered to be the Father of Modern Education and was hailed by Life magazine as one of the one hundred most influential people of the last millennium.*

* Pete Greig and Dave Roberts, Red Moon Rising (David C Cook. Kindle edition) p368-370

Born on the 28th of March 1592, in what is now the Czech Republic, Jan pioneered a revolutionary approach to elementary education, dispensing with memorization of Latin and harsh punishments, and replacing them with a highly visual style of teaching in the children's own language, which taught them to explore and understand the world.**

** Phil Anderson, *The Lord of the Ring* (Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition) p70

He wrote some of the first children's picture books, and championed equal opportunity for impoverished children and education for women.

He considered the reformation of education itself as the church's great gift to society. He once said, "What I have written for youth I have written, not as a teacher, but as a theologian."*** He believed that education should equip a person to live a life that flourished in both material and spiritual terms.

*** J. A. Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1623), trans. Louthan/Sterk (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), p27

Ask

I am always learning and applying new skills. As I read the news; as I read the Bible; in conversations with friends, family and colleagues. Every day holds potential for growth and for potential flourishing.

God, sharpen my mind and equip me for life and for flourishing. May I grow spiritually and deepen in my love for You and for others. What will You teach me today?

Pause and pray

God, today I pray for school teachers. I pray that You would strengthen and equip them as they help children to explore and understand the world. I pray for those I know now. Grant them creativity and innovation and a desire and ability to nurture and nourish children mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually.

Pause and pray

Yield

Author Phil Anderson writes that, "Jan and the religious group he was part of, the Moravian Brethren, experienced intense religious persecution. He and his remaining followers eventually had to flee over the mountains to Poland. As they turned back for a final view of their native land, Comenius looked up to heaven and prayed. He asked that God would preserve a "hidden seed" that would one day grow and become a great tree once again." ****

**** Phil Anderson, *The Lord of the Ring*(Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition) p70

In his book, *Red Moon Rising* Pete Greig notes that, "The 'hidden seed' was to spring back into life in 1722 when a Moravian carpenter called Christian David encountered Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and asked if he could find them a place where they could practice the heart religion of the early church without persecution. Zinzendorf promised to give it some thought, and returned to his estate in June to find that Christian David had presumed he would say yes and had arrived already! They

began building a new community on Zinzendorf's Berthelsdorf estate, which would become known as Herrnhut, a phrase that meant 'the watch of the Lord'." *****

***** Pete Greig and Dave Roberts, Red Moon Rising (David C Cook. Kindle edition) p369

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield to God today with a prayer attributed to Jan Amos Comenius,

'Call me whenever you desire, wherever you desire, however you desire Only may your good spirit guide me and lead me through the snares of the world as on level ground.' *****

***** J. A. Comenius, The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart (1623), trans. Louthan/Sterk (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), p225

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 126:

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

Psalm 126:6

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full,

being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,

being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost,

proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

November 16 2021 (click for audio)

Life Breaks In

Today is Tuesday the 16th of November, and this week we are continuing to pray through the life of Jesus.

Together we will pray **(P.R.A.Y.)** very simply every day – **‘P’: PAUSING** to be still. **‘R’: REJOICING** with a Psalm and **REFLECTING** on a passage from Mark’s Gospel. **‘A’: ASKING** God to help us and others and **‘Y’: YIELDING** to His will in our lives, and His invitation to follow Him.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me...
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.
Psalm 23:4a, 6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I return to the story of Jesus and the daughter of Jairus. Jesus arrives at her home, ready to heal, only to be told that the sick girl has died...

He went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.’ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha kum!’

(which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.
Mark 5:39-43 (NIV UK)

I imagine this story from the young girl's perspective: were her last memories of illness, weakness and fear? Did she know what was happening when she fell into the sleep of death? I wonder if this young girl could remember the moment when a voice broke the silence with the words 'Talitha kum!', when breath filled her empty lungs, when light banished darkness as she opened her eyes to see the face of Jesus?

Ask

I wonder how this encounter with Jesus shaped the rest of her life?

I think about my life. What experiences and encounters with Jesus have most shaped and strengthened my faith?

Jesus, today I remember and say thank You.

Pause and pray

Jesus spoke life into a hopeless situation of sickness and death. Who do I know who is sick, grieving, or suffering in some other way today? In the name of Jesus, I speak life and hope into their situation.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage I imagine myself, standing with Jesus' disciples, watching this miraculous scene unfold...

He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha kum!' (which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.
Mark 5:39-43 (NIVUK)

Sadly, Jairus' daughter would have one day faced death again, but the gift of life she was given pointed to a greater, more powerful resurrection to come; the world-changing resurrection of Jesus. Not a resurrection to the same mortal life I live today, but to a new kind of eternal life, in a body immune to death and suffering.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, thank You. Because of You, death will not be the end of my journey. Instead, death will be but a border I cross to enter a new land to come. I long for the day I'll live there, face-to-face with You. Until then, help me live each day with hope, gratitude and love.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NIVUK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

November 17 2021 (click for audio)

Unwelcome Miracles

Today is Wednesday the 17th of November, and this week we are exploring the life and invitation of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's mercy today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 103...

*[God's] unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.
The Lord is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
Psalm 103:11-13 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a low point in Jesus' ministry. His reputation as a teacher and miracle worker was growing. Now he has returned to His home, to share the message of God's kingdom with those He knew best...

Jesus left there and went to his home town, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Mark 6:1-6a (NIV UK)

This was not the welcome Jesus expected or deserved. Instead of cheering on the local boy, His friends and neighbors took offense at him. Maybe they didn't like what He had to say. Maybe familiarity had bred contempt. Or maybe they were simply envious of Jesus' growing reputation.

Whatever their reason, this community chose to take offense. That choice closed the door to God's miraculous work among them and, incredibly, God didn't force the door open again.

Ask

I live in a culture where being offended is wielded like a weapon. Where people are 'canceled' – shunned for expressing unpopular opinions – and forgiveness is rarely granted.

Who am I offended by? Who do I overreact to?

Lord, give me the compassion and strength to forgive. I don't want my offense to close the door to relationship with them; or with You..

Pause and pray

Have I offended people for the wrong reasons? Have I been unkind? Petty? Have I been arrogant and dogmatic? Have I failed to listen? Is there someone holding something against me because of something I have said or done? I pray for them now.

God, how can we be reconciled?

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Jesus left there and went to his home town, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Mark 6:1-6a (NIV UK)

What word or phrase jumped out at me?

I am struck by the response, 'Isn't this the carpenter?' This community watched Jesus learn His adoptive father's trade; they knew Him as a builder and a craftsman. But they couldn't see that Jesus was now working with His heavenly Father to craft something much grander and more beautiful than anything He had constructed before.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus the carpenter, I place my life into Your skilled hands; I invite Your work in me. Forgive me, and teach me to forgive. I offer You my skills – no matter how mundane – how can I use them to build Your kingdom 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 Matthew's Gospel:

...if [I] forgive other people when they sin against [me], [my] heavenly Father will also forgive [me].

Matthew 6:14 (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.

November 18 2021 (click for audio)

The Urgent Gospel

Today is Thursday the 18th of November. This week we are continuing to pray through the story of Jesus as told in the Gospel of Mark, asking ourselves: what does it mean to follow Jesus today?

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

Sing a new song to the Lord!

Let the whole earth sing to the Lord!

Sing to the Lord; praise his name.

Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

Psalm 96:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a moment of acceleration in Jesus' mission...

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.'

Mark 6:6b-11 (NIV UK)

This is more than just a graduation for the disciples who've been training with Jesus. Yes, they are being sent out to put theory into action, but there's something more significant happening.

Jesus' mission is reaching its crescendo and He wants as many as possible to hear the message of the Kingdom. So, Jesus divides His friends into pairs, entrusts them with His message, and challenges them to rely on God's provision as He sends them out.

Ask

If I'm honest I often don't feel the same sense of urgency Jesus does in this passage. I can be a bit apathetic about sharing the good news of Jesus; I assume there will always be another day, another opportunity.

Jesus, today is the day. Fill me with Your Spirit and entrust me with Your message. Who are You sending me to?

Pause and pray

The disciples didn't go alone; each had a companion to share their journey with.

Jesus, who are You sending me with? Who are the companions who encourage me, who pick me up, who keep me focused on You? 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.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.'

Mark 6:6b-11 (NIV UK)

Jews usually shook the dust from their feet when they left Gentile territory. It symbolized their desire to separate themselves from Gentile practices and beliefs. They literally shook off the residue of a place and moved on.

Instructing the disciples to do this in a Jewish area was shocking. It underlined the seriousness of rejecting Jesus' message. This was a moment of such urgency that the disciples couldn't stay where God's kingdom wasn't welcomed, but instead they moved on to others who may be more open.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, sometimes I wish I could control the reaction of others, but You gave each and every person the freedom to choose You or not. Today I yield to Your call to share Your Gospel, without being able to control how it's received.

Yielding Promise

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

'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Matthew 28:18-20 (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.

November 19 2021 (click for audio)

Who Is Jesus?

Today is Friday the 19th of November, and this week we are praying through the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's reputation today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 145...

*I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor
and your wonderful miracles.*

*Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue;
I will proclaim your greatness.*

*Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness;
they will sing with joy about your righteousness.*

Psalm 145:5-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I reflect on the curiosity, questioning and confusion caused by Jesus' growing fame...

They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed with oil many people who were ill and healed them. King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'He is Elijah.' And still others claimed, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.' But when Herod heard this, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!'

Mark 6:12-16 (NIV UK)

Who is Jesus?

This was the question on everyone's lips.

Everyone had a different opinion, but they all agreed on one thing. This traveling Rabbi was someone to pay attention to. Wherever He went, God moved.

Ask

Who is Jesus to me today? My friend, my Savior, my example, my hope or something else?

I pause and worship Jesus Christ, today.

Pause and pray

Who do I know who is asking the question, who is Jesus? Maybe a friend, a family member or someone on a local Alpha Course.

Jesus, reveal Yourself to them personally 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.

They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed with oil many people who were ill and healed them. King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.' Others said, 'He is Elijah.' And still others claimed, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.' But when Herod heard this, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!'

Mark 6:12-16 (NIV UK)

Herod's theory about Jesus' identity says a lot about him. In this revolutionary Rabbi he sees echoes of the provocative prophet he himself had executed. His response to God's power at work in Jesus isn't amazement or wonder, but a guilty conscience.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I am painfully aware that I often project my own feelings, opinions and desires onto You and what I think You're like. Today, I ask You to help me fix my eyes on Jesus and learn more about who You truly are to me and to the world.

Yielding Promise

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

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

November 20 2021 (click for audio)

Unholy Ambition

Today is Saturday the 20th of November, and this is the last day this week that we will pray through events captured in the Gospel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's goodness 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 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am pausing the story of Jesus to learn more about Herod the Tetrarch, a regional ruler who had a love / hate relationship with Jesus' cousin John...

For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in

prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For

John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' So

Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because

Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod

heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

Mark 6:17-20 (NIV UK)

Herod was an ambitious man. His authority came from Rome, but he wanted more. He wanted to be known as The King of the Jew and attempted to win the allegiance of the people by rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

John was a man sent to prepare Israel for God's King. He tarnished Herod's image by calling him out for marrying his sister-in-law. Publicly and repeatedly, John showed Israel just how little regard this wannabe King had for Jewish law (Leviticus 18:16; 20-21).

Ask

Instead of admitting his sin, Herod tried to silence the person who exposed it. What sin do I work hard to hide and live in fear of being seen by others?

God of unfailing love, I take the step of admitting it to You now.

Pause and pray

Herod's family was full of complicated relationships and betrayals. I know that sadly, many families are broken in all sorts of ways. I pray now for any families that come to mind.

God of endless mercy, bring Your healing and reconciliation to them.

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 Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.
Mark 6:17-20 (NIV UK)

Herodias nursed a grudge – she was angry – she wanted to kill John. Jesus once said, 'You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder...' (Matt. 5:21-22a MSG) I haven't murdered anyone, but am I nursing a grudge? Am I holding onto a seed of anger?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I yield to You my grudges and my anger. It's not good for the people involved and it's definitely not good for me. I embrace again Your upside-down path of humility, forgiveness and love.

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 John:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (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.

November 21 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 21st of November, and this week we have been reflecting on the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

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

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

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

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

Pause and pray

This week, the life of Jesus has highlighted the priority of mission but today I stop striving to save the world and instead make space for the Lord to preach the gospel to me, to come and save me. Sunday is a day to be born again – again! And so I take time now to get right with God, to repent of my sins, to give thanks for the cross, to receive the Spirit once more.

Pause and pray

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

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

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

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

Pause and pray

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

Thank You, Father, that You loved the world so much that You sent Your only Son. Please Help me to love the world with extraordinary generosity. (John 3:16). Thank You, Jesus, that You gave up everything and died for me. Please help me to lay down my life for those who don’t yet know You.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for giving those first disciples such courage and power. Please fill me now with that same boldness this week.

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

Amen

** Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

November 22 2021 (click for audio)

C.S. Lewis: Hero of Creativity

Today is Monday the 22nd of November, feast of the author and scholar C.S. Lewis who died on this day in 1963. 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. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the inspiring example of C. S. Lewis, a much-loved hero of creativity.

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

Creator God, who formed us from dust, breathe in me again. Give me a new imagination to perceive new possibilities today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's creativity today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 19...

The heavens proclaim the glory of God.

The skies display his craftsmanship.

Day after day they continue to speak;

night after night they make him known.

Psalm 19:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Clive Staples Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Northern Ireland to a creative and intellectual family. His Dad told animated stories and his nurse entertained him with Irish folklore and fantastical legends. Lewis adored the tales of Beatrix Potter so at just five years old he began to create his own world: Animal Land. He would often hide away in a quiet attic room and write stories of daring adventures.

As a child Lewis was told to pray, though he wasn't taught much about God. When his mother fell ill, he asked God to help, but, sadly, his mother passed away. Shortly after her death, at just nine years old, Lewis was sent to a boarding school in England. His time there was miserable. The principal, an old Reverend, would beat his pupils and insisted that they pray strenuously. The school was eventually closed when the reverend's wife died and he was declared insane. Sadly, by this point, young Lewis was losing what little faith he had, and by 18 years old he described himself as an atheist.

After World War 1 Lewis moved to Oxford to study philosophy and ancient history. Lewis loved Oxford and eventually became a fellow at Magdalen College in 1925. By this time he was a published poet

and a popular teacher. He enjoyed being surrounded with like minded people and found great friends in writer Charles Williams, poets William Yeats, Walter de la Mare and John Masefield, as well as John Tolkien, author of The Lord of the Rings. Together, this group of literary enthusiasts were known as The Inklings. Lewis was shocked to discover that his good friend Tolkien was a dedicated Christian. He had hoped to be safe from people of faith among this intellectual group. His disturbance grew when atheist friends began to question the meaning of life and eventually defected to Christianity!

In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis described how God pursued him...

You must picture me alone in [my] room at Magdalene, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not see then what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a Prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape?... The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.*

*C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p182-183

Ask

What was my journey to Jesus like? Was I a reluctant convert like Lewis? I take a moment to reflect on my story and give thanks to the God who welcomed me, His prodigal child, with open arms.

Pause and pray

Who have I been praying for to come to faith? Maybe for a long time?

God, I persevere and pray for them again today. Whether it takes a week or a decade, make yourself known to them, be unrelenting in revealing Your love.

Pause and pray

Yield

Lewis used his creative and intellectual gifts to help others discover God. He brought Christianity into his lectures and became a well-known author and radio broadcaster. During World War II he took in three children who had been evacuated from the city and shared with them tales of Animal Land. This retelling of his childhood writings developed into *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, possibly Lewis' best known and loved book. In its pages, generations have read of a battle between good and evil, and been introduced to Aslan, the Lion who laid down his life to save another.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I may not have the talent or intellect of C. S. Lewis, but I offer You the skills and creativity I do have. Use my abilities to help others discover Jesus 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:

...in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28 (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.

November 23 2021 (click for audio)

No Escape

Today is Tuesday the 23rd of November, and this week we are in the book of Mark, responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. 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

Jesus, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's holiness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 77...

*...I recall all you have done, O Lord;
I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago.
They are constantly in my thoughts.
I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works.
O God, your ways are holy.
Is there any god as mighty as you?
You are the God of great wonders!
You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations.
By your strong arm, you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
Psalm 77:11 – 15 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am continuing to reflect on the story of King Herod and John the Baptist. Herod is on the fence about John, but his wife Herodias is not. She wants him dead.

*Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.
The king said to the girl, 'Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you.' And he promised*

her with an oath, 'Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.'

She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?'

'The head of John the Baptist,' she answered.

At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: 'I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a dish.'

Mark 6:21-25 (NIV UK)

I often wonder about Herodias' daughter. Was she complicit in the crime? Or bound by royal protocols, and family loyalty, was she exploited, tangled in events much bigger than her? I wonder how she felt as she had to dance in front of a crowd of powerful and possibly drunken men, and when her mother asked for the head of John the Baptist?

Have I ever felt backed into a corner, snared by circumstances and other people's expectations? Maybe my boss asks me to lie to a client. Or fudge a report. Have I ever felt tempted or compelled to act in ways that are not in keeping with what I know to be right and true?

Ask

Lord, I pray for courage to resist evil, both within and around me. In circumstances where there appears to be no way out, would You rescue me. If I am in a situation like that right now, God I ask You to show me a way of escape.

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for young women and men all over the world who are trapped in the sex trade. Who are exploited and used as pawns for unholy purposes. Lord, would You rescue, deliver and heal them. I pray for the work of organizations like Justice and Care who work to rescue people from human trafficking. Would You give them all the resources they need to restore hearts and lives and catalyst policy reform to protect the Vulnerable.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage I picture the scene in my mind's eye. Who do I identify with in the story? Herod? Herodias' daughter? One of the guests at the banquet, watching the drama unfold?

Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, 'Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you.' And he promised her with an oath, 'Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.'

She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?'

'The head of John the Baptist,' she answered.

At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: 'I want you to give me right now the

head of John the Baptist on a dish.'

Mark 6:21-25 (NIV UK)

'Whatever you ask, I will give you.' Impulsive words. Words that perhaps, Herod later regretted. How many times, caught up in the heat of the moment, have I said or done something that I wished I could take back?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord I repent for my hasty words and actions, particularly those that have caused others harm. Please forgive me and give me the courage to make amends to those I have hurt. I also repent for any time I pressured someone to do something they were not comfortable with. God, would You make me a safe person, one who reflects Your character and Your ways.

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 Corinthians:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

November 24 2021 (click for audio)

Witnesses of Faith

Today is Wednesday the 24th of November, and this week we are continuing to explore Jesus' invitation to follow him in the book of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's trustworthiness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 145...

*All of your works will thank you, Lord,
and your faithful followers will praise you.
They will speak of the glory of your kingdom;
they will give examples of your power.
They will tell about your mighty deeds
and about the majesty and glory of your reign.
For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.
You rule throughout all generations.
The Lord always keeps his promises;
he is gracious in all he does.
Psalm 145:10-13 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am continuing to reflect on the high drama of Herodias' plot to kill John the Baptist. Pleased by the dancing of Herodias' daughter, Herod offers her anything she wants. Coached by her mother, the daughter gives her request: John the Baptist's head on a platter...

The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a dish. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body

and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:26-29 (NIV UK)

What an end to a dinner party! And what an undignified and unjust end for John the Baptist, a man devoted to God, a faithful witness.

John was the first in the New Testament to be martyred. Over the next few centuries, followers of Jesus were stoned to death, crucified, beheaded, fed to lions, burned at the stake, and tortured and killed in all kinds of horrible ways.

‘ These Christians who died for their faith were—and still are—called “martyrs,” a word that means “witnesses.” They’re called witnesses because that’s exactly what they were doing through their deaths: witnessing to their love for God and their friendship with him—their faith.’*

*Loyola Kids Book of Heroes, Loyola University Press, 2003

Ask

God, are there times I shrink back in fear from being a witness to my friendship with you? I pray You would give me love and courage. Help me to be a faithful witness to Your love, goodness, and the beauty of the Gospel.

Pause and pray

Open Doors, an agency that supports the persecuted church, reports that today over 340 million Christians worldwide suffer persecution and discrimination.

God, I pray for the persecuted church all over the world, with the words of Paul in the book of Colossians:

[I] continually ask God to fill [them] with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that [they] may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that [they] may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified [them] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:9a-12

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 king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a dish. He presented it to the

girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:26-29 (NIV UK)

Earlier, when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan, he was confident about Jesus' identity. Later, behind prison bars, John wasn't so sure, sending his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed the hoped for Messiah.

When John died, he joined the company written about in Hebrews 11:13: 'All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.'

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, perhaps today I'm confident about who you are and what you will do. Or maybe I'm feeling a bit wobbly. Maybe I will never see the things I hope for, the things You promise. But today I take hold of faith and welcome those things from a distance. Jesus, You are my destiny and my destination. I put my hope in 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 Romans 9:

*'See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall,
and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.'*

Romans 9:33 (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.

November 25 2021 (click for audio)

Come Away

Today is Thursday the 25th of November, and this week we are continuing to walk with Jesus through the Gos pel of Mark.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's restoration 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...
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.
Psalm 23: 1-3, 6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

We leave Herod's horrible dinner party behind, and re-join Jesus and the disciples in the thick of ministry...

*The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'
So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus*

landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Mark 6:30-34 (NIV UK)

‘They did not even have a chance to eat’. Sometimes I can relate to that level of busyness. Maybe I have an infant that needs nurturing; or maybe it’s a baby business that needs the same. Maybe I said ‘yes’ to too many church committees, or the demands of an active life leave me feeling depleted.

In the midst of the busyness, can I hear the voice of Jesus inviting me: ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest?’

Ask

Jesus, help me to come with You to a quiet place. I confess I find it hard sometimes to step off the front line of my life, to unplug from digital distraction and the expectation that I be available to others at all times. Thanks that You come with me, that You are always with me.

I grip my hands and imagine all the responsibilities that I hold. Then I release and relax my hands, let it all go, and rest in Your presence.

Pause and pray

God I pray for pastors, leaders, for elders, deacons and missionaries of all kinds. Thanks for the seasons of fruitful ministry you give them. I pray that You would help them to come with you by themselves. To be quiet. To give You their responsibilities, their burdens and their weariness, and to receive Your rest. In the quiet, I pray for a weary leader now.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Mark 6:30-34 (NIV UK)

When the disciples and Jesus got away to a solitary place, they discovered that the hungry crowds had beat them there. If it was me, I probably would have turned around and just got back in my boat!

But Jesus saw that they were like 'sheep without a shepherd'. This phrase is used through the scriptures to describe the people of Israel when they had no leader, no king. These sheep are flocking to Jesus, and he steps up to lead and to teach them.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You are the good shepherd. You lead me beside still waters and green pastures. You restore my soul. And You also lay down your life for Your sheep, sacrificially giving Yourself away again and again. I yield myself today to Your good leadership.

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 Peter:

*[My] divine power has given [you] everything [you] need for a godly life through [your] knowledge of [me] who called [you] by [my] own glory and goodness.
2 Peter 1:3 (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.

November 26 2021 (click for audio)

Kingdom Generosity

Today is Friday the 26th of November. It's been a week of dinner parties in our exploration of the Gospel of Mark. First Herod's, and now Jesus's feast in the wilderness.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's abundance 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 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

After a busy time of ministry, the disciples attempt to go on retreat. However, they've been interrupted by a hungry crowd...

*By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.'
But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'
They said to him, 'That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?'
'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.'*

When they found out, they said, 'Five – and two fish.'

Mark 6:35-38 (NIV UK)

I can't help but wonder if the disciples have eaten yet? In yesterday's part of the story, they had been so busy they didn't have time to eat. Then a boat ride (not much you can cook on a boat). And I'm pretty sure there wasn't a drive through on the way. Is Jesus asking them to give away to the crowd what they don't even have themselves?

How many times has God asked me to give away what I don't have? What is Jesus thinking?

Ask

God, I give you my emptiness. My insufficiency. I know You're far more interested in my availability than my capability. I thank You for all the resources of heaven that are at Your command, and at my disposal. I know I have only to ask, so today I ask. Thank You that it is Your good pleasure to give me the kingdom.

Pause and pray

I wonder what miracles we miss because we set our hand only to those things we can accomplish with our own strength and resources?

God, I pray for Your church. Forgive us for playing it safe. I pray that we would take risks, rise to every challenge You send our way, and see the release of the resources of heaven. Let your kingdom come.

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.

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.'

But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'

They said to him, 'That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?'

'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.'

When they found out, they said, 'Five – and two fish.'

Mark 6:35-38 (NIV UK)

Could you imagine being Jesus' executive assistant? What a nightmare! He never stuck to schedule and was completely unpredictable. You would think the disciples would get tired of trying to manage Jesus. They had a hard time figuring out what he was up to, and why.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus please forgive me for all the times I have tried to manage You according to my schedule and my expectations. I acknowledge that You are still a mystery to me, and most of the time I'm not sure what You're up to or what You're after. Today I commit to listen, to follow, and to obey even if, and especially if, I don't understand.

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 42:

*I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.
Isaiah 42:16 (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.

November 27 2021 (click for audio)

Bread from Heaven

Today is Saturday the 27th of November, and this week we are on the journey with Jesus, responding to His call to follow him.

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, as I run the race today, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith. I hear Your invitation to me, and so once again, I choose to pick up my cross and follow You. (Hebrews 12:1-2 & Matthew 16:24)

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 63...

*I have seen you in your sanctuary
and gazed upon your power and glory.
Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
how I praise you!
I will praise you as long as I live,
lifting up my hands to you in prayer.
You satisfy me more than the richest feast.
I will praise you with songs of joy.
I lie awake thinking of you,
meditating on you through the night.
Because you are my helper,
I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings.
Psalm 63:2-7 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

The crowds are hungry. The disciples' pockets are empty. But Jesus is up to something...

Then Jesus told them to make all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. The

number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Mark 6:39-44 (NIV UK)

Feed the crowd? With what?

If I'm honest, when I sit down to write a Lectio 365 devotional, this is the way I feel sometimes. I try not to feel intimidated. I remind myself that it's not about me. And then I dig out my little lunchbox; my loaves and fishes. And hand them to Jesus, asking Him to bless and to multiply them.

Ask

Jesus I'm so grateful that it's OK to be little. That I don't have to be the sharpest tool in the shed, the loudest voice in the room. The biggest, the bravest, the strongest. Thanks that all You want is me – little old me, and my little lunch. As I hand it to you I can see Your smile and hear You say, 'I can work with that.'

Pause and pray

God I pray for a spirit of generosity in Your Church. In an age of economic disparity, with a widening gap between the rich and the poor, may the people of God give cheerfully and sacrificially. May we fill up the food banks, sponsor children overseas, donate towards aid and food programs. As we look at the hunger in the world, may we hear Your voice saying to us, 'you feed them'.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I picture myself in the scene. Where do I find myself in the story? Maybe I'm one of the disciples, sorting and sitting people into groups. Maybe I'm in the crowd, hungry and curious. Maybe I relate to Jesus, who is reaching for a miracle...

Then Jesus told them to make all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Mark 6:39-44 (NIV UK)

I love that there was enough. That there was more than enough; they all ate and were satisfied. It feels like a foreshadowing of a generous God, who gave His own Son, the Bread from heaven, to be blessed, to be broken, to be shared with the people.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, today I taste and see that You are good. I feast on the abundance of Your house. You are the bread of heaven and I receive Your nourishment 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 John 6:

Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

John 6:32-33

Closing Prayer

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

November 28 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

Today is Sunday the 28th of November, the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a new series within Lectio 365 called Journey to Jesus. Together, as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus, we will be praying through the story of the first Christmas as told in the Gospel of Luke.

It's great that Advent begins on a Sunday, because for Christians Sundays are traditionally our Sabbath day of rest. December is just a few days away and can be a pretty stressful month. It can fly by in a blur of tinsel and turkey.

Today, I embrace this Sabbath start as an opportunity to go a little slower this Advent.

And so, I prepare my heart for Christ's coming.

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

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus

Pause and pray

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus.

Pause and pray

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus

Pause and pray

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

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

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

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

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

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for filling my life.

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

A Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

Amen

*Adapted from A Sabbath Blessing, Pete Greig, petegreig.info

November 29 2021 (click for audio)

An Orderly Account

Today is Monday the 29th of November, and this week we look forward to Christmas as we begin exploring the Advent journey to Jesus through the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the way Luke begins his account of the Good News about Jesus...

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.
Luke 1:1-4 (NIV UK)*

There is pretty good evidence that the author of this book was one of Paul's mission companions – the man the apostle named, 'our dear friend Luke, the doctor' (Colossians 4:14). And, if he was a doctor, he had also learned to study and write like a historian.

Luke almost certainly never met Jesus, but he was willing to do the hard work of researching written records and interviewing people who had seen Jesus and heard him teach. He then artfully crafted his words to give readers like the 'most excellent Theophilus', whose name means 'lover of God', confidence in the story of Jesus, so that we might each learn to love and follow him.

Ask

Do I know a 'Theophilus'? Someone interested, but who hasn't met Jesus yet? How might I tell the Jesus story in a way that makes sense to them?

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for Christians who are skilled communicators. Not just preachers, but writers and actors, artists and authors, poets, painters, film producers, directors, musicians, songwriters, and singers. Would You inspire them again, this Advent Season

Yield

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

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.
Luke 1:1-4 (NIV UK)*

I notice the word, 'fulfilled', which suggests, right at the beginning of this story about Jesus, that this is also a kind of an ending. Here, a longer narrative is being brought to conclusion. In the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, after the resurrection, Jesus reminds His disciples, 'everything must be fulfilled that is written about me' (Luke 24:44).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to Your big story. May I find my place in Your purpose to transform the world.

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 40:

*I said, "Look, I have come.
As is written about me in the Scriptures:
I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written on my heart."
Psalm 40:7-8 (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.

November 30 2021 (click for audio)

Blameless but Childless

Today is Tuesday the 30th of November, and this week we look forward to Christmas as we begin exploring the Advent journey to Jesus through the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s incomparable kindness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 113...

*Who can be compared with the Lord our God,
who is enthroned on high?
He stoops to look down
on heaven and on earth.
He lifts the poor from the dust
and the needy from the garbage dump.
He sets them among princes,
even the princes of his own people!
He gives the childless woman a family,
making her a happy mother.
Praise the Lord!
Psalm 113:5-9 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on what it is like to live with disappointment when all hope of a miracle has faded...

*In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.
Luke 1:5-7 (NIV UK)*

If anyone ought to have known God's blessing, you'd think it would be Zechariah and Elizabeth. He was a priest; they both came from the best families. They kept all God's commands. They did everything right. They really were Mr and Mrs Perfect. But still, they had no children.

Ask

What disappointment am I living with? Is there something which weighs heavy on my heart? A prayer unanswered? A desire unfulfilled?

I take a moment to talk to God about it now.

Pause and pray

I think of someone I know for whom life feels desperately unfair. They have tried to do the right thing, but satisfaction eludes them. Perhaps they are losing faith, struggling to open themselves to God as they see bad things happening to good people.

Lord, would You draw near to them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Luke 1:5-7 (NIV UK)

'They were both very old'. The burden of time weighs heavily on this couple. But have they grown old too soon?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to the possibility of new hopes and dreams. I let go of regret and everything that would anchor me to a barren past. I embrace Your dream for my future.

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 92:

*The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord;*

*they flourish in the courts of our God.
In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,
showing that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.
Psalm 92:12-15 (NRSVA)*

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.