

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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Dec 2021

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

[Month of Dec 2021](#)

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December 01 2021 (click for audio)

Zechariah and the Angel

Today is Wednesday the 1st of December and this week we look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 sovereignty over everything today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 103...

*The Lord has made the heavens his throne;
from there he rules over everything.*

*Praise the Lord, you angels,
you mighty ones who carry out his plans,
listening for each of his commands.*

*Yes, praise the Lord, you armies of angels
who serve him and do his will!*

*Praise the Lord, everything he has created,
everything in all his kingdom.*

Let all that I am praise the Lord.

Psalm 103:19-22 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Zechariah's unexpected encounter in the temple.

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.'

Luke 1:8-13 (NIV UK)

A priest would only offer incense once in his lifetime. This was the greatest day of Zechariah's career. While the people prayed outside, he alone carried those prayers into God's presence.

Some, no doubt, were personal petitions for healing, or for help in hard times. But there were big prayers, too, that Messiah would come and deliver Israel from their enemies.

This was the moment the angel appeared saying, 'your prayer has been heard.' What had seemed like a private sorrow for Zechariah and Elizabeth was now revealed as part of God's plan to bring salvation to the world.

Ask

I wonder how different my life would look if I could see it from God's perspective? Is there an angel waiting to startle me out of my small ideas?

Lord, would You open my eyes to see the bigger picture – that my life is never just about me. Shake me and shape me, so that I may live adventurously for You.

Pause and pray

Zechariah was carrying great responsibility for his entire nation on the day the angel came bringing him a message from God.

I think of someone I know, perhaps in government, or industry, or a church leader; someone whose decisions affect many people. I wonder if they need to hear a message from God also. I pray for 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...

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.'

Luke 1:8-13 (NIV UK)

I notice the angel's opening words, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.'

And I wonder, what is my prayer? Is there something I am asking for, which I have not yet received?

Seeking, but that I have not yet found? Am I knocking at a door which remains unopened? Or have I stopped praying altogether, afraid that I will be disappointed, terrified that no one is listening?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield to Your invitation as You say, 'do not be afraid.' I surrender my fears, and all my anxious thoughts. Thank You that You hear me.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 56:

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise –

in God I trust and am not afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalm 56:3-4 (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.

December 02 2021 (click for audio)

Prepare for the Lord

Today is Thursday the 2nd of December, 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 the joy of God's salvation today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 50...

*Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.
Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.
Psalm 50:10-13 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on what the angel said to Zechariah about the son who would shortly be born to him and his wife...

*... the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'
Luke 1:13-17 (NIV UK)*

John 'will be great in the sight of the Lord', but Jesus is going to be greater. John's mother had been unable to conceive a child, but Jesus' mother will be a virgin. John 'will be filled with the Holy Spirit... before he is born', but Jesus will be conceived by the Holy Spirit. John will 'make ready a people prepared for the Lord', but Jesus is the Lord.

Ask

We put a lot of effort into preparing for Christmas; putting up trees and decorations; buying food and presents; but am I prepared for the Lord? Is my heart ready for Him to come to me anew in this season of waiting?

And so, I pray, Maranatha – come Lord Jesus!

Pause and pray

Lord I pray for my neighbors as they also are probably preparing in some way to celebrate Christmas. Where families are divided, would You turn the hearts of parents and children to one another, and bring them all closer to You. May this be a special year for them.

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 angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

Luke 1:13-17 (NIV UK)

What does it mean, I wonder, to 'go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah'? I'm reminded of the book of James where it says that 'Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently...' (James 5:17 NRSVA). John the Baptist would later be famous for the way he taught his followers to pray*.

* See Luke 5:33 and Luke 11:1

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to Your call to pray. I'm reminded that Elijah and John the Baptist were ordinary people; human just like me. But their urgent prayers turned men and women's hearts to one another and to God.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in James 5:

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
James 5:16

Closing Prayer

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

December 03 2021 (click for audio)

Vision, Signs, and Silence

Today is Friday the 3rd of December, and this week we look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 presence today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 16...

*I will bless the Lord who guides me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I know the Lord is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.
No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.
My body rests in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.
You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.
Psalm 16:7-11 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

An angel has appeared to Zechariah in the temple and announced the good news that he is going to have a son who will turn people's hearts to God. But the old priest has his doubts. Today I am reflecting on his failure to believe the message...

Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on years.' The angel said to him, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.' Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he

had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

Luke 1:18-22 (NIV UK)

Zechariah still has a question: 'How can I be sure?' How much more proof does he need? God has heard him. I wonder, is it more important to pray faithfully even if I don't always have what feels like faith?

Ask

Do I pray for things that I don't really believe will happen? Or do I pray prayers which are so vague that I would never know if they have been answered?

Lord, help me to be faithful in prayer. Prompt me to keep praying, and may I have courage to pray bold, outrageous prayers, even when the answers seem impossible. Lord, I do believe. Please help my unbelief

Pause and pray

Lord, I think of someone I know who needs a miracle right now, something that seems humanly impossible. Lord, I pray for 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 Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on years.' The angel said to him, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.' Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

Luke 1:18-22 (NIV UK)

'And now you will be silent', says the angel. Most commentators call this a punishment, but I wonder if it was God's kindness. During this enforced season of silence, did Zechariah learn to trust God?

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to silence that I might be filled with faith. In the quiet place, may I hear Your voice.

Pause and pray

Yielding Promise

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

*... there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.
Habakkuk 2:3 (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.

December 04 2021 (click for audio)

Favor

Today is Saturday the 4th of December and this week we look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 favor today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 30...

*Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may last through the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
Psalm 30:4-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on how Gabriel's promise to Zechariah began to be fulfilled...

*When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 'The Lord has done this for me,' she said. 'In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.'
Luke 1:23-25 (NIV UK)*

Things are changing. Elizabeth is pregnant. But she stays secluded for five months – a long time to be hidden away at home. Perhaps she needed this time to be certain that she wouldn't lose the baby. With Zechariah silent, Elizabeth speaks thankfully to God: 'The Lord has done this for me... he has shown his favor'.

Ask

Is there a promise from God that I am holding onto? Something growing in me that hasn't fully come to birth yet – an idea for a business, or the dream of a different way of living? Maybe it's still a small and fragile thing, and this is not the right time to tell other people; it's a time to be silent, a time to let it grow in seclusion.

I talk to God about it now.

Pause and pray

I think of someone I know who is living through a time of change. Perhaps they are about to have their first child, or start a new career, or move to a new city, or retire.

Lord, in all that is happening, may they find Your favor.

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...

When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 'The Lord has done this for me,' she said. 'In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.'
Luke 1:23-25 (NIV UK)

I am struck by the words of Elizabeth's prayer, 'The Lord... has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace'. All her married life Elizabeth has endured pitying stares and shaming whispers from her neighbors wondering why this priest's wife was not a happy mother with children; or by now, a grandmother. What joy it is for her to now live without disgrace.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to Your great grace. You have freed me from sin and shame and shown me Your favor; I relinquish the illusion that I have a right to judge or shame other people. May I be kind and show grace always.

Yielding Promise

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

*Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

*Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this:
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn.
Psalm 37:4-6*

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.

December 05 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

Today is Sunday the 5th of December, and the second Sunday of Advent. Today, we pause from our regular rhythm to slow down and embrace a day of rest.

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

December 06 2021 (click for audio)

A Troubling Message

Today is Monday the 6th of December. This week we are following the journey to the birth of Jesus as told in the Gospel of Luke focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation, and His invitation to us to partner with 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

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 great love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 107:

*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 107:21,22 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Mary's initial response to the word delivered to her by the angel Gabriel. Angelic visitations don't happen everyday; I imagine it would be startling. Gabriel's message would change Mary's life forever...

*In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.'
Luke 1:26-30 (NIV UK)*

Reading this passage of how God's plan of salvation is unfolding, I am filled with wonder and hope. But Mary wasn't initially filled with the same sentiment. Mary was not just troubled but greatly troubled by the words 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'

What did those words sound like to Mary? Why did they trouble her? Wasn't this a good greeting?

Ask

Have there been times when I have received a message from God that caused me to react like Mary?
Why was I troubled?

Pause and pray

Father, I pray for those who are hesitant to receive a message from You because of fear. I pray that they would come to know Your heart towards them and receive Your word with open arms.

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.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.'

Luke 1:26-30 (NIV UK)

I love how gentle the Lord is with Mary. He knows her fears and what was keeping her from opening her heart to Him. God's message, through the angel Gabriel, was one of favor, but Mary couldn't receive it at first because her guard was up. He kindly repeats his message to reassure Mary and put her fears to rest.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, forgive me for when fear keeps me from receiving all that You have for me. Today I choose to trust in your kindness and be at rest in your goodness.

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:

'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you 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.

December 07 2021 (click for audio)

Not Just Any King

Today is Tuesday the 7th of December. This week we are focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation, and His invitation to us to partner with 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

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 majesty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 95:

*Come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him.
For the Lord is a great God,
a great King above all gods.
Psalm 95:1-3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the declaration of the coming of Jesus, the King. The fulfillment of God's promise to his servant David and the people of Israel...

*But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.'
Luke 1:30-32 (NIV UK)*

Mary was told that she was going to birth a king – but not just any king – the King. I love how the angel was specific, His name was to be called Jesus, He would be great, He would be called The Son of The Most High. And just in case Mary wasn't getting the picture, the angel pointed to the promise in Isaiah, given to King David of the Messiah who would come from his family line and rule forever over Israel.

Ask

Lord, I confess that there are times when I have not recognized Your majesty, and You have been small in my eyes. Be magnified King Jesus, I bow before You now.

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for Your church. Give us eyes to see You, to behold Your majesty and splendor. May we be so fascinated with who You are that we have to tell the world about 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.

But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.'

Luke 1:30-32 (NLT)

In a world where rulers come and go, where government leaders rise and fall, it can be hard to fully grasp what this could even look like. Isaiah prophesies about a King whose great government and peace will be endless (Isaiah 9:6-7). He will reign forever and bring peace to the world; with no pain, no death and no tears.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus I submit to Your Kingship. I receive Your hope. May I live in the light of Your rule and reign.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Luke 12:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32 (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.

December 08 2021 (click for audio)

Impossibilities

Today is Wednesday the 8th of December. This week we are focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation, and His invitation to us to partner with 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

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 unfailing love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 63...

*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.
Psalms 63:3-4 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the power of testimony to encourage my faith when I'm faced with an impossible situation.

'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'
The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'
'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her,
Luke 1:34-38 (NIV UK)

I love how practical Mary was. How will this be?

And though the angel tried to explain supernatural things to Mary, she needed a practical example. And what better than a faith-building testimony about someone in her own family! If that could happen for Elizabeth, there was nothing God couldn't do!

Ask

Holy Spirit, remind me of ways you have made the impossible possible. If You've done it before You can do it again.

Pause and pray

Father, I take this time to pray for an impossible situation in the life of a friend or family member or our church community. You can do anything! May Your will be done.

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.

*Allowing the word 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'
The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'
'I am the Lord's servant,'
Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.*

Luke 1:34–38 (NIV UK)

Allowing the word of God to be fulfilled in my life could lead to remarkable things; I can never fully know whose life could be changed when I say 'yes' to God's will and God's way.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Today I yield to Your Holy Spirit and to the power of the Most High God. May I not resist Your word, Your will or Your ways. I am the Lord's servant, may Your words that you speak over my life be fulfilled.

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 55...

*...so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:11 (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.

December 09 2021 (click for audio)

Holy Spirit Movin'

Today is Thursday the 9th of December. This week we are focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation, and His invitation to us to partner with 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

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 glory today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 66.

*Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
Sing about the glory of his name!
Tell the world how glorious he is.
Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds!'
Psalm 66:1-3a (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the movement of the Holy Spirit in Mary and Elizabeth's lives, and my own..

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!'

Luke 1:39-45 (NIV UK)

I have become so familiar with this story that I often overlook the little things that point to the work of the Spirit. How did Elizabeth know that Mary was to bear the Son of God? Mary didn't share her experience with Elizabeth, she only greeted her. But the word says that at Mary's greeting, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Did God reveal it to her by His Spirit?

Ask

Lord, Your Holy Spirit is at work all around me. Help me to not shy away from Your Holy Spirit activity and how He may be working in and through me.

Pause and pray

Lord, I take time now to pray that the older men and women in my church community will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Show them how You are partnering with them in this season of their lives to plant the seeds of your Gospel.

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 that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!'

Luke 1:39-45 (NIV UK)

The baby leapt for joy? Wow, even the baby in the womb experienced what was happening. Why? I wonder if it has to do with the last line: 'she believed!' Mary believed God's promise to her and was a willing vessel for the Lord. Salvation for Israel and the world was on its way!

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I am thankful that I get to partner with You in Your plan of salvation, I yield to Your Holy Spirit.

Yielding Promise

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

*In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people...
Acts 2:17 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

December 10 2021 (click for audio)

Who, me?

Today is Friday the 10th of December. This week we are focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation, and His invitation to us to partner with 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

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 as my safe place today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 59...

*"But as for me, I will sing about your power.
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.
For you have been my refuge,
a place of safety when I am in distress.
O my Strength, to you I sing praises,
for you, O God, are my refuge,
the God who shows me unfailing love.
Psalm 59:16,17 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today as I meditate on Mary's song, I reflect on the ways of the Lord...

And Mary said:

*'My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.
Luke 1:46-49 (NIV UK)*

I love how God sees me differently to the way I often see myself. Maybe I think I'm unqualified, not smart enough, not the right age, or with the right talents. Often, I think I'm not the 'type' of person that God notices or even wants to partner with in His grand plan?

Mary knew that God was the God who was mindful of the humble.

Ask

Forgive me Lord when I believe the lie that I am not enough and that I am overlooked by You. You are the God who sees, and You see me.

Pause and pray

I pray today for those who feel overlooked, who feel like You are not interested in their lives. God, show them who You are, and that You see and love 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.

And Mary said:

*'My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.*

Luke 1:46-49 (NIV UK)

The Mighty One, the all powerful, all knowing, majestic God stepped down into the life of a young lowly servant girl and forever changed her. For generations to come everyone would know Mary's name and how vital she was in bringing Jesus, The Savior, to earth.

That's what He did for her. Only He works in this way. That is why He is called holy. No one does things like God!

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Today I make Mary's song my own and I say yes to the blessing.

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 149:

*For the Lord takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.
Psalm 149:4 (NKJV)*

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.

December 11 2021 (click for audio)

Do I Notice?

Today is Saturday the 11th of December. This is the final day this week that we are focusing on God's plan to bring forth salvation as told in Luke's Gospel and God's invitation to us to partner with 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

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 today because God is praiseworthy! I join 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.
Psalm 145:10-12 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on how God is present and active in our world, perhaps in ways I may not be paying attention to...

*His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
Luke 1:50-52 (NIV UK)*

As I look at the world around me, where is God working? How is He extending mercy? Do I see Him at work in the rise and fall of those in power? In the elevation of the humble?

Ask

God I'm sorry where I haven't believed or noticed that You are active in the world around me, when I accused You of not moving in power.

Open my eyes, Lord, to see Your mighty deeds.

Pause and pray

Father, I pray for those who say, 'where is your God?' Open their eyes. In the quiet I bring to mind one person I know who struggles to see You at work in their life.

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.

*His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
Luke 1:50-52 (NIV UK)*

There are times when I have pride deep within me and I don't even know it. I can't see myself rightly but when God looks at me, with His eyes of mercy, His kindness leads me to repentance.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Search me Lord. Reveal where I am proud in my innermost thoughts. And may I yield to You and walk humbly before You today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Philippians 1:

*[I] who began a good work in [you] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6 (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.

December 12 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

Today is Sunday the 12th of December, the third Sunday of Advent. Today, we pause from our regular rhythm to slow down and embrace a day of rest.

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. So, let's pray for all three of Christ's comings this Advent:

*Thank You, Father, for loving us so much that You sent Your Son to save us.
Maranatha. May Jesus be born again amongst us this Christmas.*

*Thank You, Jesus, that You came before and You are coming again in glory.
Maranatha. We long for You to return and make all things new.*

*Thank You, Holy Spirit, for filling my life.
Maranatha. May the Lord Jesus Christ be born again in me today.*

A Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

December 13 2021 (click for audio)

Mercy, Piled High

Today is Monday the 13th of December, and this week we are continuing to look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 great faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Lamentations 3...

*I will never forget this awful time,
as I grieve over my loss.
Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:
The faithful love of the LORD never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.
Lamentations 3:20-23 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the second half of Mary's song, which she sang at the beginning of her three-month stay with her cousin, Elizabeth...

*'He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
just as he promised our ancestors.'*

*Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.
Luke 1:53-56 (NIV UK)*

Mary sings not only of God's justice – of the ways that God reaches out to those in need – but she also sings of God's mercy.

In Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this passage he says that God, 'remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.' (Luke, 1:54 MSG) It makes me think of being buried under a huge pile of cushions, or stacking dinner plates so high that they are about to topple over. God's mercy is like this... extravagant, generously given, more than enough.

Ask

Where am I in need of God's mercy today? I take a few moments now to talk honestly with God about this.

Pause and pray

I notice that Mary sings about those who are hungry. According to the UN's World Food Program, a staggering '45 million people are on the brink of famine across 43 countries'* today.

[*https://www.wfp.org/stories/42-million-people-are-knocking-famines-door-and-us66-billion-could-save-them-now-0](https://www.wfp.org/stories/42-million-people-are-knocking-famines-door-and-us66-billion-could-save-them-now-0)

Merciful God, I cry out to You. Turn the hearts of those with power and influence – politicians and other leaders - towards those in such desperate need.

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.

*'He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
just as he promised our ancestors.'*

*Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.
Luke 1:53-56 (NIV UK)*

I wonder what Mary and Elizabeth talked about during their three months together? I imagine that Elizabeth described in great detail what she'd learned of her husband's encounter with Gabriel the angel, and that Mary described her encounter too. I wonder if they searched the scriptures for what had been prophesied about their future sons? I'm sure there were moments when they just looked at each other and wondered, 'Why us?', as they marveled at the mercy and favor of God upon their lives.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

For centuries, Christians have prayed 'Lord, have mercy' (or Kyrie Eleison). I use this simple prayer as I yield to God's great mercy today.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I remember the promise in today's verses from Lamentations that:

The faithful love of the LORD never ends!

His mercies never cease.

Lamentations 3:22 (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.

December 14 2021 (click for audio)

Named By God

Today is Tuesday the 14th of December, and this week we are continuing to look forward to Christmas as we explore 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

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 that God knows me today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 139...

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
You saw me before I was born.
Psalm 139:13-16a (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the naming of Jesus’ cousin, John...

*When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.
On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, ‘No! He is to be called John.’
They said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who has that name.’
Luke 1:57-61 (NIV UK)*

Names are often important in the Bible. For example, Sarah and Abraham named their son 'Isaac', which means 'laughter', and Jesus changed Simon's name to 'Peter', which means 'rock'. It was also common for parents to name their baby after a family member, which is what Elizabeth and Zechariah's friends expected them to do.

Ask

I think about my own name for a moment. What does it mean to me? Was I named after someone? Has it changed? How do I even feel about my name? In the quiet, I offer all of these thoughts and feelings – the good and the not-so-good - to God.

I imagine God smiling, and then speaking my name, '... I know you, I love you.'

Pause and pray

Millions of children around the world have lost both of their parents, often because of war or disease, and are now orphans.*

* <https://www.unicef.org/>

Loving God, the numbers overwhelm me, but You know the name of every one of these children. I cry out to You... have mercy on them. May they find places of safety and family.

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 it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, 'No! He is to be called John.'

They said to her, 'There is no one among your relatives who has that name.'

Luke 1:57-61 (NIV UK)

Thinking about names today has reminded me of an old English-language children's rhyme, which goes something like this: 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words (or names) will never hurt me.'

It's not true, of course. Name-calling can cause harm and hurt. I wonder if any of the nicknames or the language that I use with my friends are more harmful than I realize?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd and You know my name. I yield to the sound of Your voice calling my name, and I choose to follow. Help me to use my voice today to speak words of encouragement and comfort to all those I meet.

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:

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
Isaiah 43:1 (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.

December 15 2021 (click for audio)

Begin With Praise

Today is Wednesday the 15th of December, and this week we are continuing to look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 simply rejoice in who God is today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the familiar words of Psalm 100...

Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!

Worship the LORD with gladness.

Come before him, singing with joy.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psalm 100:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am continuing to reflect on the naming of John, Jesus' cousin. People were confused when Elizabeth insisted that her baby was to be called John. So they asked Zechariah, who hadn't been able to speak for nine months!

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, 'His name is John.' Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, 'What then is this child going to be?' For the Lord's hand was with him.

Luke 1:62-66 (NIV UK)

Luke says that 'they made signs' to Zechariah. Most commentators agree that this means he was probably deaf as well as unable to speak. If so, for nine months he'd been living in complete silence.

And then, suddenly, the silence ended and the first thing Zechariah heard was his own voice, giving thanks and praise to God.

Ask

When things are difficult, do I choose thanksgiving and praise first?

I take a few moments to talk with God about this as I re-center my scattered senses on God's loving presence with me.

Pause and pray

Many people who are deaf, or who have some other disability, find it difficult to feel like they belong in church.

Heavenly Father, how can my church be more hospitable and welcoming to those who feel excluded because of disabilities? Show me what we can do.

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 they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, 'His name is John.' Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, 'What then is this child going to be?' For the Lord's hand was with him.

Luke 1:62-66 (NIV UK)

'What then is this child going to be?' they asked. Or, as the God's Word (GW) translation puts it, 'What does the future hold for this child?'

I pause for a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to bring a child I know to mind – maybe from my own family, or my church community – and I pray for God's blessing on their future.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, I surrender all that I am feeling to You right now. I use David's words from Psalm 103 as my prayer of thanksgiving and praise today... 'Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.' (Psalm 103:1, 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 Psalm 37:

*Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give [me] the desires of [my] heart.
Psalm 37:4 (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.

December 16 2021 (click for audio)

South Africa's Day of Reconciliation

Today is Thursday the 16th of December, and we are going to take a break from our usual pattern and pray a little differently today as we remember a very special day - South Africa's Day of Reconciliation.

For the last 26 years people all over the world have marked this day, the 16th of December, to remember the peaceful end to apartheid and to encourage reconciliation and unity around the world.

The word apartheid means 'apartness'. Apartheid was a system for keeping white people in South Africa separated from everyone who wasn't white. Today I am reflecting on one of the men who helped start the idea for the Day of Reconciliation – Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Father God, open my eyes, fill my heart with compassion, and teach me how to 'act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly' with You. (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 103...

*The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.
He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
Psalm 103:8-11 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

During most of Desmond Tutu's life, laws in South Africa segregated people according to their race. Schools, homes and jobs were separated - life was much more difficult for those who weren't white. Desmond Tutu was often treated unkindly by other South Africans - he was beaten and even put in prison, simply because of the color of his skin.

When he was a young boy, out walking with his mother, he was surprised to see a white man, a priest, take off his hat as a sign of respect to his mother, a black woman. That sign of peace, friendship, and dignity had a big impact on young Desmond. It showed him that he didn't need to behave like everyone else. These small examples of Jesus' kindness were a powerful way to fight against hate and inequality.

When Desmond Tutu was a teenager he was sick with tuberculosis and in hospital for over a year. A priest used to visit him and showed him the love and care of Jesus. It was during this time that Desmond decided to give his life to helping others.

These moments shaped his life. Desmond Tutu is now known around the world as a religious and political leader. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in the ending of apartheid. And after apartheid ended, he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He heard many terrible stories of injustice and pain but was most overcome by the courage of others to say 'I'm sorry', and the power of 'I forgive you'.

Desmond Tutu is a beautiful example of someone who chose to forgive rather than get revenge.

Ask

Today is South Africa's Day of Reconciliation. Reconciliation means bringing people together, and often the best way to do that is by showing kindness.

Loving God, I ask You to help me be kind to everyone, to be a 'minister of reconciliation', someone who brings others together.

Pause and pray

I think for a moment about places around the world where there is conflict, where people are separated because of where they come from, what they believe or what they look like.

God of Peace, during this Advent season, I ask You to bring people together. Help them to forgive one another and be kind, even when they disagree

Pause and pray

Yield

I receive the following words, taken from Desmond Tutu's book, *God Has A Dream*, as if they were written directly to me:

'Dear Child of God, I write these words to you because we all experience sadness, we all come at times to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in the world will ever end. I want to share with you my faith that... there is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine. God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now – in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally. Indeed, God is

*transforming the world now - through us - because God loves us.”**

** Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*

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] reconciled [me] to himself through Christ and gave [me] the ministry of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:18 (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.

December 17 2021 (click for audio)

Songs of Redemption

Today is Friday the 17th of December, and this week we are continuing to look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 redemption today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 130...

*I long for the Lord
more than sentries long for the dawn,
yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.
O Israel, hope in the LORD;
for with the LORD there is unfailing love.
His redemption overflows.
He himself will redeem Israel
from every kind of sin.
Psalm 130:6-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am returning to Zechariah's response to the question about his newborn son, 'What then is this child going to be?'

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

*'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago)
Luke 1:67-70 (NIV UK)*

Zechariah's song is a song of redemption, which is known in many parts of the Church as the 'Benedictus' or the 'Blessed be'.

The first half focuses on the Messiah – the 'horn of salvation' - and the redemption that he will bring. And then the second half focuses on Zechariah's son, John, the prophet who will 'prepare the way' for the Messiah (Luke 1:76, NIV UK).

Ask

Psalm 96 encourages me, like Zechariah, to 'Sing to the LORD a new song... to proclaim his salvation day after day.' (Psalm 96:1-2, NIVUK)

I take a few moments now to sing my own song of praise to Jesus.

Pause and pray

Psalm 96 continues by encouraging me to 'Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.' (Psalm 96:3, NIV UK)

As I think of a nation that is on my heart right now, I continue by singing words of freedom over its people

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.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

*'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago)
Luke 1:67-70 (NIV UK)*

Until this point, Zechariah's part in the Advent story hasn't been particularly impressive. When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, she was troubled and confused, and yet she still chose to put her trust in the Lord. When the angel visited Zechariah, however, in spite of his years serving as a priest in the temple, he was full of fear and doubt.

Zechariah's song is also, therefore, his own song of redemption, an example of the fact that God continually offers second chances to those who fear and fail.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, I see more of myself in Zechariah's fear than in Mary's faith. And so, I am grateful for Your grace, and the 'second chances' You offer, repeatedly, when I fail. I yield myself to You, and I ask You to put a new song in my heart 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 Job that:

*my Redeemer lives,
and he will stand upon the earth at last.
And after my body has decayed,
yet in my body I will see God!
Job 19:25-26 (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.

December 18 2021 (click for audio)

God's Rescue

Today is Saturday the 18th of December, and this week we are continuing to look forward to Christmas as we explore 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 protection today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 138...

*Though I am surrounded by troubles,
you will protect me from the anger of my enemies.
You reach out your hand,
and the power of your right hand saves me.
The LORD will work out his plans for my life—
for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.
Don't abandon me, for you made me.
Psalm 138:7-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am continuing to reflect on Zechariah's song. In it he expresses gratitude for God's mercy, God's protection and the gift of a fearless life...

*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David...
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us –
to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear*

in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
Luke 1:69,71-75 (NIV UK)

When Zechariah spoke about being ‘rescued from our enemies’, he almost certainly had the Romans in mind, the occupying forces in his homeland. He, like many others, expected the Messiah to set God’s people free from these enemies.

However, Jesus, the Messiah, spoke about the enemies of God’s people in a very different way. ‘God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,’ he said, ‘for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.’ (Matthew 5:10-11, NLT)

Ask

Father God, help me to seek first Your Kingdom and Your justice, and not to be afraid about how others may react when I do.

Pause and pray

According to Open Doors UK, more than 340 million Christians suffer persecution and discrimination, simply because they follow Jesus.*

* <https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Heavenly Father, using words from Zechariah’s song, I cry out to You... Save them from the hands of those who hate them. Rescue them, I pray.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David...
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us –
to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*
Luke 1:69,71-75 (NIV UK)

The phrase, ‘to enable us to serve him without fear,’ caught my attention. In John’s first letter he says that ‘love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear...’ (1 John 4:18, NLT)

I wonder what it would be like to live and serve God 'all my days' filled with love, with no space for even the smallest fear?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, I yield myself to You. I ask You to deliver me from every fear – the big ones and the small ones too - and displace them with Your perfect 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 Psalm 138 that:

*Though I am surrounded by troubles,
[God] will protect me from the anger of my enemies.
Psalm 138:7 (NLT)*

Closing Prayer

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

December 19 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

Today is Sunday the 19th of December, and the fourth Sunday of Advent. Today, we pause from our regular rhythm to slow down and embrace a day of rest.

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. So, let's pray for all three of Christ's comings this Advent:

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

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

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

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

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for filling my life.

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

A Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

December 20 2021 (click for audio)

The Final Word

Today is Monday the 20th of December, Christmas Day is nearly here! This week, to prepare ourselves to celebrate Jesus' coming, we are continuing to pray through the story of Christmas, in 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 word today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Isaiah 55...

*The rain and snow come down from the heavens
and stay on the ground to water the earth.*

*They cause the grain to grow,
producing seed for the farmer
and bread for the hungry.*

*It is the same with [God's] word.
[He] sends it out, and it always produces fruit.*

*It will accomplish all [He] want[s] it to,
and it will prosper everywhere [He] send[s] it.*

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I pick up the Christmas story at the moment when Zechariah's wife Elizabeth has given birth to John, the miraculous son that God had promised to them. In his joy, Zechariah sings...

*'And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
....for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven*

*to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.'*

*And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he
appeared publicly to Israel.*

Luke 1:76-80 (NIV UK)

This song is so much more than the hopes of a proud Dad; this song is prophetic. In it lay a road map for John's life; it pointed him in God's direction before he could even take his first step. As John grew, I wonder if his Dad sang this song to him again? How much did these words shape John's sense of identity and purpose in God?

Ask

Have I received a prophecy that has shaped my identity and purpose?

God, remind me of the words You have spoken over my life...

Pause and pray

John played a very specific part in God's plans, but there is an aspect of his calling that I can join in with. I too can prepare the way for God in the lives of others. I think now of someone I know who doesn't know Jesus.

God, I prepare the way in prayer – what is Your plan for their life? Can I share a word of encouragement with them today?

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*'And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
....for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.'*

*And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he
appeared publicly to Israel.*

Luke 1:76-80 (NIV UK)

God doesn't just speak to me through the gift of prophecy. Any time I need to hear from Him I can open the Bible and receive His word. Through its pages I know that I am fearfully and wonderfully made in His image (Gen. 1:27, Psa. 139:14). No matter where I find myself God will guide me and hold me fast (Psa. 139:10). He is my safe place and I can trust Him (Psa. 91:2) because God loves me so much, He sent His Son to die for me. Whether I know what path my life will take or not, I know that I am made to live with God for eternity (John 3:16).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I confess that I don't always pay attention to what You say about me. Sometimes I forget. Other times I allow Your voice to be drowned out by other voices. Today I yield to Your word. 'Lead me along the path of everlasting life.' Psalm 139:24b (NLT)

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:

'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'
Jeremiah 29:11 (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.

[December 21 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

Setting The Stage

Today is Tuesday the 21st of December, and this week we are exploring the Christmas story in 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

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 sovereignty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 22...

The poor will eat and be satisfied.

All who seek the LORD will praise him.

Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

For royal power belongs to the LORD.

He rules all the nations.

Psalm 22:26-28 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I reflect on the political landscape surrounding Jesus’ birth...

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Luke 2:1-4 (NIV UK)

Roman rulers would order a census for two reasons: to discover how many soldiers they could draft into their army, and to know how many people they could tax. Traveling 70 miles, through mountainous terrain, with a heavily pregnant woman, just so Augustus could measure his power and wealth, must have been incredibly hard for Joseph. But what he didn't yet know was that God was working through the whims of an emperor to set the stage for the arrival of His Son.

Ask

What seems particularly hard in my life right now?

God, show me how You are working for my good, even in this situation. (Rom. 8:28)

Pause and pray

In 1 Timothy, Paul urges me to, 'Pray every way [I] know how... for rulers and their governments to rule well...' (1 Tim. 2:1-2 MSG) I pray now for my national leaders – even if I didn't vote for them.

God, I ask You to work in and through the leaders of my country. Your kingdom come and Your will be done in this nation as it is in Heaven.

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.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Luke 2:1-4 (NIV UK)

The prophet Micah said that God's ruler would rise from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The prophet Jeremiah said that this ruler would come from the line of King David (Jer. 23:5-6). Caesar Augustus, whose name means 'exalted one', had no idea that he was helping to fulfill ancient prophecy. God used an arrogant emperor to prepare for the birth of His humble King.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I can be impatient. I want Your plans to move at my pace and meet my expectations. But, today I put my trust in Your greater wisdom and perspective. Your kingdom come and Your will be done however, wherever, whenever and with whomever You see fit.

Yielding Promise

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

[The Spirit] knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

Romans 8:28 (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.

December 22 2021 (click for audio)

Humble Beginnings

Today is Wednesday the 22nd of December and this week we are reaching the climax of the Christmas story in 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 majesty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 145...

*I will exalt you, my God and King,
and praise your name forever and ever.
I will praise you every day;
yes, I will praise you forever.
Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!
No one can measure his greatness.
Psalm 145:1-3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

From today until Christmas day I am reflecting on the events surrounding Jesus' birth...

*So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.
Luke 2:4-7 (NIV UK)*

It's happened! Jesus is here! The one through whom all things were made (John 1:3) has put His fragile, newborn life into the hands of a teenage mother. He's here to show the world just what God is like (Col. 1:15), and He's chosen to begin not in a mansion, but in a manger.

Ask

If I'm honest, I want to move up in the world, not down. I work to gain status and power, not lose it. Yet, Jesus, You did the exact opposite. You had more power and glory than I could ever imagine and You set it all aside so that I could know You. Thank you.

Pause and pray

Because Jesus humbled himself, Paul says in Philippians that, 'God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord...' (Phil. 2:9-11 NIVUK)

So Jesus, I pray an outrageously big prayer for my nation... I pray that everyone (everyone!) will hear the good news of Your coming this Christmas.

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...

*So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.
Luke 2:4-7 (NIV UK)*

This is what the kingdom of God looks like. An unknown child, born in humble surroundings. A small seed that grows into the largest of garden plants. A sprinkle of yeast that makes its way through the whole dough. The Christmas story challenges me to trust in small beginnings.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I yield to Your humble and unstoppable kingdom action. I surrender my need to be part of something large and impressive, and instead I commit myself again to follow in my servant King's footsteps.

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:

*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
Matthew 6:33 (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.

December 23 2021 (click for audio)

Good News!

Today is Thursday the 23rd of December. Christmas is just a couple of days away and we are preparing by exploring the story of Jesus' birth in 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 presence with me today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 84...

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of Heaven's Armies.
I long, yes, I faint with longing
to enter the courts of the Lord.
With my whole being, body and soul,
I will shout joyfully to the living God.
Psalm 84:1-2 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on the coming of Jesus and the events surrounding His birth...

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'
Luke 2:8-12 (NIV UK)*

I'm often surprised by the people God chooses to include in His story. Shepherds led a hard life. They were humble men and their care for animals would have sometimes made them 'unclean' by Jewish law (Lev 11:39-40). Yet they were the only people to whom God sent an angel to announce that His Son had been born. Into the muck and mundanity of their everyday lives, the good news of great joy broke in.

Ask

I think through the next few days – the special occasions and the everyday moments that will make up my Christmas.

God, I don't want to go through the motions, too distracted by tinsel and turkey to pay attention to You. I welcome Your Spirit now – keep my eyes open so I can see how You are present in my day.

Pause and pray

The angels brought a message of peace and joy. Who do I know who needs either peace or joy (or both!) today? I name them before God now and I pray:

Jesus, be good news to them in unexpected ways this Christmas.

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 there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

Luke 2:8-12 (NIV UK)

There was something very special about the flocks outside Bethlehem. This was the place where lambs were raised for the Jewish Temple sacrifices. It's very possible that the shepherds in the Christmas story were caring for Temple sheep. I love that these ordinary caretakers were the people God chose to meet, 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29b)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, it's easy to let the busyness and stress of Christmas distract me from the real reason I'm celebrating. Today I fix my eyes on You. Help me to live the next few days as a carrier of Your joy and peace.

Yielding Promise

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

The last will be first, and the first will be last.
Matthew 20:16 (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.

December 24 2021 (click for audio)

Songs of Praise

Today is Friday the 24th of December, it's Christmas Eve and we are continuing to pray through the story of Jesus' birth in 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 sovereignty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 97...

The LORD is king!

Let the earth rejoice!

Let the farthest coastlands be glad.

Dark clouds surround him.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Psalm 97:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on the story of the shepherds: the only people who received angelic messengers to announce that God's Son had been born...

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Luke 2:13-16 (NIV UK)

I imagine myself among the shepherds. The night begins like so many before it – I'm out in the fields, trying to stay warm, resisting the temptation to close my eyes. Out of nowhere an angel appears, and then a whole host arrives and the skies erupt with the praise of heaven, bursting out into the night. I stand with my mouth hanging open...

Ask

I am so familiar with the Christmas story it is easy to become indifferent to the incredible event I'm celebrating. So – before I write another Christmas card or wrap another present - I pause to join in the praise of heaven and worship Jesus, my King...

Pause and pray

God, there are many people, like the shepherds, out in the cold, trying to keep warm this Christmas Eve. I pray that You would visit them in a miraculous way.

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.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Luke 2:13-16 (NIV UK)

Though many don't yet realize it, centuries of hoping and waiting have come to an end for Israel. The carol 'O Holy Night', captures this moment beautifully:

*'Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;
Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.'* *

**O Holy Night is based on a poem by Placide Cappeau, and was set to music by Adolphe Adam*

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, my soul finds worth in You. In Your love and forgiveness I find peace and a reason to celebrate. As I prepare to celebrate Your coming, I offer You my day as a sacrifice of praise.

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:

*The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.
Isaiah 9:2 (NLT)*

Closing Prayer

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

[December 25 2021 \(click for audio\)](#)

Christmas Day

Today is Saturday the 25th of December. Happy Christmas from all of us at 24-7 Prayer! All through Advent we have been praying together through the story of Jesus' birth captured in 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 goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 98...

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth;
break out in praise and sing for joy!
Sing your praise to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song,
with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn.
Make a joyful symphony before the Lord, the King!
Psalm 98:4-6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I join Mary, Joseph and their newborn son as they welcome some unexpected visitors...

*So [the shepherds] hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.
Luke 2:16-20 (NIV UK)*

These shepherds will never be the same again. They've encountered an angel with a message of hope, witnessed a heavenly host praising God, and have been propelled from their fields to find Jesus, the newborn King. Incredibly, they found Him not in a palace but in a place for animals, lying in a manger, a humble tool of their trade.

This group of ordinary working people were called in from the fields and welcomed into the heart of one of the greatest moments of human history.

Ask

How will the coming of Jesus affect me today?

I pause now. I imagine myself among the shepherds. I bow before Jesus, the long-awaited King of Kings...

Pause and pray

I love that God welcomes and includes all kinds of people into His story. There are many people who feel like they are left out this Christmas. I pray now for those who feel lonely and overlooked. (Maybe I feel like one of them?)

God of inclusion, help those who feel alone to experience Your welcome today. Who can I reach out to?

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...

So [the shepherds] hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2:16-20 (NIV UK)

What word or phrase jumped out at me?

I was struck by this sentence: 'Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.' What is the Lord doing, or what is He saying to me that I need to treasure, to ponder, to hold on to?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, thank You for the gift of Your Son Jesus. I receive Him again into my heart and my home this Christmas Day. I respond with the words of Christina Rossetti's hymn 'In the Bleak Midwinter'...

*'What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would give a lamb;*

*If I were a wise man;
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him:
Give him my heart.' **

**<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53216/in-the-bleak-midwinter>*

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:

*For a child has been born—for us!
the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
Strong God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Wholeness.
Isaiah 9:6 (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.

December 26 2021 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Advent

It is Sunday the 26th of December. Christmas Day is behind us; the New Year has yet to arrive. This week we have been exploring the story of Christmas in the Gospel of Luke.

As we enter this day of rest, we continue to celebrate the incarnation and invite Jesus' presence by the Holy Spirit into today. Together we return for the last time to an ancient prayer of the church: 'Maranatha, come Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22:20).

I repeat these words now:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus

Pause and pray

Turning my attention to focus on my own heart, I 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

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 as we approach the New Year, whether they are in person or online, and I pray again, for us:

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus

Pause and pray

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

Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus

Pause and pray

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

*Thank You, Father, for loving us so much that You sent Your Son to save us.
Maranatha. May Jesus be born again amongst us.*

*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.

December 27 2021 (click for audio)

Spirit-filled and Led

Today is Monday the 27th of December, and this week we are continuing our reflections on the birth of Jesus in 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 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.
Psalm 63:2-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Some time after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. When they got there, they had a strange and wonderful encounter...

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:
"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,*

*which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”*
Luke 2:25-32 (NIV UK)

This is a familiar story, but what jumps out to me this time is the repeated references to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was on Simeon. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would see the promised Messiah before he died. And the Holy Spirit moved Simeon to be at just the right place at the right time to see and to receive what had been promised.

Ask

I take a moment to become aware of the Holy Spirit within me.

Holy Spirit, remind me of Your promises for my life and my future. I listen to Your guidance. Lead me to be at the right place and the right time to receive what You have promised.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for Your Church. May we be filled with, encouraged, empowered by, and led by Your Holy Spirit. Lead Your people on adventures with You, showing up at just the right place at just the right time so we can be a conduit of Your blessing to others.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

*“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”*
Luke 2:25-32 (NIV UK)

Simeon understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of all of God’s promises not only to him personally, but to his people Israel, and beyond that, to all the people on the earth.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, all of God's promises are yes and amen in You (2 Corinthians 1:20). I hold You in my heart today and I praise 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 Exodus 33:

I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Exodus 33:19 (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.

December 28 2021 (click for audio)

Mysterious Lives

Today is tuesday the 28th of December, and this week we are completing our reflections of the christmas story in 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

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 perfection today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 27...

*The one thing I ask of the Lord—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
delighting in the Lord’s perfections
and meditating in his Temple.
For he will conceal me there when troubles come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary.
He will place me out of reach on a high rock.
Then I will hold my head high
above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,
singing and praising the Lord with music.
Psalm 27:4-6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

I re-join Mary and Joseph, standing stunned as Simeon blesses the baby Jesus. And then, the prophet Anna joins the party...

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she

was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.
Luke 2:36-38 (NIV UK)

Again, just like Simeon, Anna shows up just at the right place at the right time! In Alcoholics Anonymous, they say that 'coincidences are God's way of being anonymous.'

Jean-Pierre de Caussade says it this way:

'Those who have abandoned themselves to God always lead mysterious lives and receive from him exceptional and miraculous gifts by means of the most ordinary, natural and chance experiences in which there appears to be nothing unusual.'*

*Jean-Pierre de Caussade, Abandonment to Divine Providence

Ask

God help me to abandon myself to You today. May I lead a mysterious life and receive from You exceptional and miraculous gifts in the midst of the ordinary, natural and chance experiences of my day.

Pause and pray

God, today I pray for widows and widowers. I pray that they would enjoy Your companionship and would live with a sense of purpose and adventure, following Your leading, open-eyed with wonder. May they see You at work in their ordinary lives and may they tell others of Your goodness.

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.

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.
Luke 2:36-38 (NIV UK)

Sometimes people tell me that they don't feel the need for a specific time set aside to be with God, but that they just pray as they go through their day. I wonder though, if Anna's commitment to giving God her undivided attention through her regular rhythms of prayer in the Temple helped her better recognize God's presence in this moment?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, this Christmas season I give You my undivided attention. I want to see You, know You and love You. May I share with others the good news of Jesus, the child who came to rescue and redeem us.

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:

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 (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.

December 29 2021 (click for audio)

Replay: Rejoice

Today is Wednesday the 29th of December. If you've been using this app for any length of time, you'll know that there's a particular shape to the way that we pray.

Week by week we cycle through six biblical priorities, derived from the Rule of The Order of the Mustard Seed. These are: prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission. This week we are focusing on prayer, as we look back at 2021 and then look ahead into 2022.

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 to hear you now, quietly preparing my heart for the wonder of a new year.

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's incomparable goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 36...

*Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.*

*Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths.*

You care for people and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

*For you are the fountain of life,
the light by which we see.*

Psalm 36:5-7,9 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Over the next three days, rather than following the usual Lectio 365 structure, I'm going to draw on an ancient form of prayer called the Examen to help me reflect on my journey through 2021 and identify some of the ways in which God has accompanied me through this year.

The Examen begins with remembering, which is in itself an important spiritual discipline. Today, I am going to replay the last twelve months, remembering particular moments, and take time to rejoice in God's goodness wherever I recognize it.

And so, once again, I take a moment to be still in God's presence and prepare myself to reflect on 2021.

I become aware of my thoughts; especially the things that are distracting and disturbing me.

Lord, I offer You my thinking, and I ask You to give me peace.

Pause and pray

I notice my emotions; especially the feelings that are affecting my mood.

Lord, I offer You all that I am feeling right now, and I ask You to give me joy.

Pause and pray

I notice my body; especially the places where I can feel tension and stress.

Lord, I breathe slowly and deeply once again. I set myself at rest in Your presence, and I ask You to make me whole.

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, I welcome You. Guide me as I remember 2021.

When I think about the past year – the devastation of the Coronavirus pandemic around the world; the political and social upheaval; the mental health crisis; the urgent environmental challenges and so on; gratitude might not be my instinctive response, but it's where I choose to begin.

Ask

I take a few moments now to replay the last twelve months in my mind, and to recall some specific events.

What were the highlights and encouragements? What did I achieve? When did I experience joy and wonder?

I talk with God about these now, to rejoice and give thanks.

Pause and pray

As I continue to replay the last twelve months in my mind; who were the people who encouraged me? Who was there when I needed help? Whose words or actions inspired me to become a better me this year?

I take a few moments to give thanks to God for these people. (Maybe there's some way that I could express my thanks to them today..?)

Pause and pray

Yield

As I prepare to leave 2021, what do I want to take with me? What good things have I gained? What have I learned? What holy habits have I begun to develop this year that I want to take into the coming year?

I talk with God about these now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer & Promise

Returning to Psalm 36, I yield to its promises and I make it my prayer today...

Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens;

your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,

your justice like the ocean depths.

You care for people and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

For you are the fountain of life, the light by which [I] see.

Psalm 36:5-7,9 (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.

December 30 2021 (click for audio)

Replay: Lament and Repent

Today is Thursday the 30th of December, and this week we are focusing on prayer as we look back on 2021 and then look ahead into 2022.

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, as this year draws to an end, please help me to be still. I am opening my ears to hear You now, quietly preparing my heart for the wonder of a new year.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
Psalm 103:11-14 (NIVUK)*

Pause and pray

Rather than following our usual Lectio 365 structure, I'm going to continue to draw on an ancient form of prayer called the Examen to help me reflect on my journey through 2021 and identify some of the ways in which God has accompanied me through this year.

The Examen begins with remembering, which is in itself an important spiritual discipline. Today, I am going to replay the last twelve months, remembering particular moments, and take time to lament what has been difficult, and repent where I have sinned and fallen short of God's best.

And so, once again, I pause to be still in God's presence and I prepare myself to reflect on 2021.

I become aware of my thoughts; especially the things that are distracting and disturbing me.

Lord, I offer You my thinking, and I ask You to give me peace.

Pause and pray

I notice my emotions; especially the feelings that are affecting my mood.

Lord, I offer You all that I am feeling right now, and I ask You to give me joy.

Pause and pray

I notice my body; especially the places where I can feel tension and stress.

Lord, I breathe slowly and deeply once again. I set myself at rest in Your presence, and I ask You to make me whole.

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, I welcome You. Guide me as I remember 2021.

Ask

I take a few moments now to replay the last twelve months in my mind, and to recall some specific events. How has the coronavirus pandemic, and the political and social upheaval around the world affected me?

What have I found particularly difficult, or even painful this year?

I allow myself to lament, and I ask God to meet me in my desolation.

Pause and pray

Where did I get things wrong this year? In what ways have I sinned and fallen short of God's best for me?

I take a few moments to talk with God about these things now. I repent and I ask for forgiveness.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I listen to the following words from Hebrews 12, I think about what I want to leave behind as I step into the new year in a couple of days' time...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, I ask you to help me throw off the things that hinder me and hold me back. The way I compare myself with others. My reluctance to ask for help when I need it. The hurt I'm holding inside. I want to be free of these things in 2022. And I ask for your forgiveness too as I consciously turn away

from the sin that has so easily entangled me. Help me to fix my eyes firmly on Jesus and run the race marked out for me.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the extraordinary promises in today's Psalm:

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for [me];
as far as the east is from the west,
So far has he removed [my] transgressions from [me].
Psalm 103:11-12 (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.

December 31 2021 (click for audio)

Reboot and Resolve

Today is Friday the 31st of December, and this week we are focusing on prayer as we look back at 2021 and then look ahead into 2022.

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, as this year draws to an end, please help me to be still. I am opening my ears to hear You now, quietly preparing my heart for the wonder of a new year

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's guidance today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 25...

*Show me the right path, O Lord;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.
Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages past.
Psalm 25:4-6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

For the final time this week, rather than following our usual Lectio 365 structure, I'm going to draw on an ancient form of prayer called the Examen to reflect on my journey through 2021.

Over the last couple of days, I have replayed the last twelve months; I have rejoiced in God's goodness, lamented some of what has been dark and difficult, and repented of the ways in which I have fallen short in 2021. I have acknowledged the good times and the less-good times, and I have become aware of God's presence in, over and through it all. And now, as I look towards the beginning of 2022, I am ready to reboot, to prepare myself for a fresh start on the 1st of January.

And so, once again, I pause to be still in God's presence.

I become aware of my thoughts; especially the things that are distracting and disturbing me.

Lord, I offer You my thinking, and I ask You to give me peace.

Pause and pray

I notice my emotions; especially the feelings that are affecting my mood.

Lord, I offer You all that I am feeling right now, and I ask You to give me joy.

Pause and pray

I notice my body; especially the places where I can feel tension and stress.

Lord, I breathe slowly and deeply once again. I set myself at rest in Your presence, and I ask You to make me whole.

Pause and pray

How do I feel about 2022? What am I looking forward to? What am I hoping for? Am I anxious about anything? I take a few moments to talk with God about how I'm feeling.

Pause and pray

Ask

Lord, what are You asking of me this year? How do You want me to be different? Is there some new spiritual discipline or practice that You're inviting me to develop?

Pause and pray

Lord, I ask You to give me a verse from the Bible or a word or a story for 2022.

Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.

1 Samuel 3: 10

Pause and pray

Yield

As I read Paul's encouragement to the church in Philippi, I open my ears to hear what God might want to say to me about the year ahead...

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV UK)

What goal or prize is God inviting me to 'press on' towards this coming year?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I lay everything about the coming year before You. I fix my eyes on You and You alone. You are both the author and the perfect of faith. I yield to the story that You are writing in and through my life.

Yielding Promise

I am grateful for the assurance in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome that, '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) Even when I don't perceive it, God is at work in my life.

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.