

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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Feb 2022

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

Month of Feb 2022

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February 01 2022 (click for audio)

Disturbing The Status Quo

Today is Tuesday the 1st of February, and this week we are continuing our journey with Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's greatness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 34...

I will praise the Lord at all times.

I will constantly speak his praises.

I will boast only in the Lord;

let all who are helpless take heart.

Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness;

let us exalt his name together.

Psalm 34:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

A deaf man was brought to Jesus to be healed. Jesus touches the man's ears and his tongue.

What happens next?

At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said. 'He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'

Mark 7:35-37 (NIV UK)

When the previously deaf man's mouth is opened, Jesus can't get him to shut up!

The whole crowd is amazed and excited, not just about the miracle itself, but for the way it pointed towards the Messiah, prophesied about, and promised in the book of Isaiah:

*'Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.' (Isa 35:5-6)*

Ask

How excited am I about what You have done for me, God? Am I overwhelmed with amazement? I take a few moments in the quiet to remember all the ways You have been good to me.

Who might I tell about Your goodness today?

Pause and pray

God I thank you for all the signs of your coming kingdom – all the ways Your goodness and power is being manifested in the present. But I join with the rest of Your church and look forward with longing to the full manifestation of Your Kingdom and Rule. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus.

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 this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said. 'He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'

Mark 7:35-37 (NIV UK)

'He has done everything well.' It's the good kind of gossip - the hubble and buzz when God is up to something. It's also dangerous, which is why Jesus is trying to keep things on the down low. The Messiah has natural enemies - powers both human and spiritual, that are threatened and want Him dead. Following Jesus may end up being hazardous to their health!

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You are on the move and doing wonderful things. And, You are on the move and disturbing the status quo, threatening the powers, and inviting me onto a potentially perilous journey. Today I choose You and Your way.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Mark 10:

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Mark 10:29-30 (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.

[February 02 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Spiritual Amnesia

Today is Wednesday the 2nd of February, and this week we are continuing to respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him as we reflect on the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's compassion 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...
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth....
The Lord is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.*

Psalm 103: 8, 11, 13-14 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Despite Jesus' attempts to keep things quiet, word has gotten out about Him and crowds are gathering...

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.'

His disciples answered, 'But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?'

Mark 8:1-4 (NIV UK)

Didn't the disciples see Jesus feed five thousand (Mark 6)? So what's the problem feeding another measly four thousand? If He did it before. Won't he just do it again?

It's easy to judge the disciples, but if I'm honest, how many times do I suffer from spiritual amnesia? I've seen God answer prayer. I've experienced God's protection and care in my own life. And then the minute something new happens I've forgotten it all and get stuck in worry.

Ask

What am I worried about today? I name those things in God's presence.

Pause and pray

God I pray that families would proclaim Your greatness from one generation to the next (Psalm 145:4); that they would be amazing storytellers, reminding themselves, their children, and their grandchildren of all the ways You have been good to them and 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.

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.'

His disciples answered, 'But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?'

Mark 8:1-4 (NIV UK)

The disciples are motivated by convenience, but Jesus is marked by compassion. Henri Nouwen writes:

*'Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.' **

*Henri Nouwen, "You Are the Beloved: Daily Meditations for Spiritual Living", p.244

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus I'm sorry when, like the disciples, I've been motivated more by convenience than by compassion. May I respond to the invitation of compassion to go where it hurts. Give me courage to fully immerse myself in the condition of being human, and somehow mysteriously also become more like You.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Isaiah 49:

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
Isaiah 49:15 (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.

February 03 2022 (click for audio)

Deja Vu

Today is Thursday the 3rd of February, and this week we are in the gospel of Mark, exploring Jesus' invitation to follow Him.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 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!
All humanity finds shelter
in the shadow of your wings.*
Psalm 36:5-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

It's Déjà vu for the disciples. For the second time there are impossible crowds and an impossible invitation to feed them...

'How many loaves do you have?' Jesus asked.

'Seven,' they replied.

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterwards the disciples picked up seven baskets full of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand were present.

Mark 8:5-9a (NIV UK)

I wonder why Mark included both 'feeding of the multitudes' stories in his Gospel?

Some theologians suggest that the difference in location mattered. The first feast happened in a primarily Jewish area, and the second one in a region shared with Gentiles. Is it possible that Gentiles seeking Jesus may have been included in the meal? If so, that was revolutionary, as Jews and Gentiles were forbidden to eat together.

Ask

Do I tend to keep to places that I'm familiar and comfortable, where people are mostly like me, culturally, politically, even religiously? Have I created an echo chamber in my life?

Pause and pray

God I pray for Your church, particularly where we have created religious and cultural ghettos. May we be more courageous, more humble, more adventurous. Help us to venture outside of our comfort zones and meet people where they are, rather than expecting them to come to us. Who knows, we might meet You there.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

'How many loaves do you have?' Jesus asked.

'Seven,' they replied.

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterwards the disciples picked up seven baskets full of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand were present.

Mark 8:5-9a (NIV UK)

In the Bible, numbers are rarely accidental. In the feeding of the 5000 in the Jewish area, there were twelve baskets left over – possibly alluding to the twelve tribes of Israel. In the feeding of the 4000 there were seven - a number which represents completeness or wholeness in the Scriptures. Is it possible that this is pointing towards Jesus being given as a gift to Jews and Gentiles alike - to the whole world?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, please forgive me for playing it safe, for cocooning and swerving to comfort. How might You want to expand my horizons and widen my territory today? Today I receive You, bread of heaven. I taste and I see that You are good. (Psalm 34:8)

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John 6:

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

John 6:57-59 (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.

February 04 2022 (click for audio)

Hero of Justice

Today is Friday the 4th of February, Feast Day of Rosa Parks, who was born on this day in 1913. On Feast Days we pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Rosa Parks, a hero of justice.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's strength and safety, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 62...

*Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honor come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge.
Psalm 62:5-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

On the 1st of December 1955, Rosa Parks' polite refusal to give up her bus seat sparked a protest movement that changed the United States of America.

Rosa's journey that Thursday began like many others. She finished work, boarded a bus home, and sat just behind the seating reserved for white passengers. After a few stops, the bus began to fill up. When the driver saw a white man standing, he told Rosa, and three other African Americans, to give up their seats.

Rosa refused.

The police arrived and told her that if she didn't move, she would be arrested. Rosa defied cultural, legal and social pressure by simply responding, 'You may do that.'

Inspired by Rosa's arrest, the Montgomery bus boycott began and lasted more than a year. This simple act of nonviolent protest attracted national attention and eventually resulted in changes to the laws of the land.

Sharing her memories of that famous day to the Academy of Achievement's 1995 gathering in Virginia, USA, Rosa Parks said, 'As I look back on those days, it's just like a dream and the only thing that bothered me was that we waited so long to make this protest, and to let it be known that wherever we go, all of us should be free and equal and should have all opportunities that others should have.'*

*<https://youtu.be/bqiQqM9nQOU>

Ask

Rosa Parks stood (or in this case, remained seated) for what was right. She acted justly and she did it with humility.

Lord Jesus, what are You asking me to stand for? If an opportunity arises for me to act justly today, even if it feels like a small thing, please give me the courage to stand (or sit) for what is right.

Pause and pray

As I think about my community and my nation, who am I aware of that is experiencing oppression and discrimination today?

Lord Jesus, teach me to pray, and show me what I can do to change this.

Pause and pray

Yield

The author Parker J. Palmer wrote: 'You and I may not have Rosa Park's particular battle to fight... But if the Rosa Parks story is to help us discern our own vocations, we must see her as the ordinary person she is. That will be difficult to do because we have made her into super-woman – and we have done it to protect ourselves. If we can keep Rosa Parks in a museum as an untouchable icon of truth, we will remain untouchable as well: we can put her up on a pedestal and praise her, world without end, never finding ourselves challenged by her life.'**

** Parker J. Palmer, *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of Vocation*, p35

Many issues of injustice seem too big for me to tackle. What difference can I make to human trafficking, the exploitation of factory workers, or the devastating effects of climate change around the world? I feel overwhelmed by all of this, paralyzed because I can't do everything, and so I do nothing.

When Rosa Parks made the brave decision to stay seated, she didn't know the domino effect that it would have. She made a simple choice, the only one available to her in that moment; she made the

stand she could. And God used that choice, that simple act, to bring the civil rights movement to the attention of her nation.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I confess that I sometimes allow the enormity of injustice to paralyze me. Guide me as I read, as I shop, as I pray, as I work and as I interact with others. Show me the battles You want me to fight to see Your kingdom come and Your will be done for all people.

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 62:

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

Psalm 62:6 (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.

[February 05 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Slow On The Uptake

Today is Saturday the 5th of February, and this week we are following Jesus through the gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The Lord is merciful and compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
The Lord is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his creation.
All of your works will thank you, Lord,
and your faithful followers will praise you.
Psalm 145:8-10 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus and his disciples have just fed the four thousand, and are now continuing their journey...

*After he had sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.
The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.' Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.
Mark 8:9b-13 (NIV UK)*

I love that the gospel writer captures not only Jesus' words, but his feelings as well. Jesus has been going about the region doing teeny little miracles like feeding thousands of people, deliverances and healings. And in spite of all that, the Pharisees question him and ask him for a sign from heaven!

Jesus' response? A big sigh.

Ask

Ah Jesus, I wonder how many times You sigh when I approach You with an unbelieving heart? When You demonstrate Your love and Your power in my life again and again, and I still come doubting, asking You for a sign from heaven.

Please forgive me. I believe Lord, help my unbelief. (Mark 9:24)

Pause and pray

God I pray for those I know who think there may be something or someone out there, but aren't sure. Those who have doubts. Would You reveal yourself to them today in a way they can understand?

Lord, show me how I might possibly be an answer to this prayer myself.

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...

After he had sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.' Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. Mark 8:9b-13 (NIV UK)

The Gospel of Mark seems to be quite a bit about seeing and not believing, experiencing and not understanding. For some, like the disciples, Jesus patiently continues to take them on a journey of deeper understanding about who He is and what He's about. For others, like the religious leaders, He leaves them to their resistance and unbelief.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus I'm keenly aware that there are many times I see and don't believe; when I experience but don't understand. When I'm slow on the uptake and uncertain, I choose to, in the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke:

*"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in [my]heart and try to love the questions themselves... [I] live the questions now. Perhaps [I] will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."**

* Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet, Kindle version loc. 270.

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 30:

*Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.
For the Lord is a God of justice.
Blessed are all who wait for him!*
Isaiah 30:18 (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.

[February 06 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 6th of February, a day of celebration. We interrupt our usual daily pattern with a shorter, simpler time of prayer.

Today I celebrate the greatest dinner invitation of all time: *'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me'*
Rev 3:20

Pause and pray

Psalm 23 celebrates the good Shepherd's hospitality in every season of life:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Psalm 23 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Lord, thank You for leading me by quiet waters, for feeding me at Your table, and for inviting me to dwell in Your house forever. Would You please give me opportunities this week to show true hospitality to others, and to do it generously, joyfully and without grumbling. Would You give me grace to embrace interruptions as gifts from You, and Help me to make space in my schedule, at my table, in my home and my heart for others. Amen.

I pray today for the Church as it opens its doors to the world:

Father God, as millions of people gather in Your House to eat at Your table today, may we be a family defined by its kindness towards everyone.

Jesus, we pray for those who are lonely or on the margins today, and especially for those who are attending church for the first time or the last time. May they find themselves noticed and loved.

And for those who are nowhere near a church meeting today, send us out to bring the prodigals home.

Holy Spirit, revive Your church today. Form us into the most welcoming and diverse community on earth that the world may see Your love, believe in Your mercy and receive Your invitation home.

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers in my own local community, naming those I know who might otherwise find themselves forgotten or on the margins today.

Pause and pray

And now I dedicate the coming week to the Lord, accepting his invitation and offering him my heart and my home in return:

Thank You, Father, for welcoming me home into your heart.

Love me this week as I welcome You home into my heart.

Thank You, Jesus, for standing and knocking at the door of my life.

Befriend me again this week as I open the shameful and vulnerable parts of myself to you.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for brooding over the chaos of my world and within my inner being,

Fill me this week as I seek to host you with generous attention and joy.

Sabbath blessing

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

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

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

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

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

*Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

February 07 2022 (click for audio)

Here I Am

Today is Monday the 7th of February. This week we're exploring how creativity, one of the six practices at the heart of Lectio 365, can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God.

Together we are going to reflect on seven people in the scriptures who responded to God with these three simple words: 'Here I am'. Each time these words were prayed, history was changed and extraordinary things happened.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

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 Psalm 105...

*Search for the Lord and for his strength;
continually seek him.
Remember the wonders he has performed,
his miracles, and the rulings he has given,
you children of his servant Abraham,
you descendants of Jacob, his chosen ones.*

Psalm 105:4-6 NLT

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the moment God calls Abraham by name and asks him to sacrifice his only son...

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.' Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

Genesis 22:1-4 (NIV UK)

Abraham becomes the first person in the scripture to respond to God's call with the words, 'Here I Am.' Abraham's response to God calling His name is vastly different than the moment when God calls to Adam and Eve after the fall. (Genesis 3:8) Adam and Eve hide in fear and shame when they hear God calling to them, but Abraham responds with faith and trust to the voice of God.

Ask

Are there places in my life where I'm hiding from God right now?

Lord, let Your perfect love cast out any fear in my heart that would cause me to hide from You. I want to respond to You like Abraham and give You all that I am.

Pause and pray

I think of someone who struggles with fear and anxiety.

Lord, I ask that You would pour out your perfect love upon them today. May their fears be turned into faith.

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...

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.' Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

Genesis 22:1-4 (NIV UK)

I am inspired by Abraham's willingness to obey in such a challenging situation. This story does not end in death, but in a deeper faith being born in Abraham.* It reminds me of what Madeleine L'Engle said: 'The artist is a servant who is willing to be a birth giver....Each work of art, whether it is a work of great genius, or something very small, comes to the artist and says, "Here I am. enflesh me. Give birth to me."**

*In Genesis 22:10-12 Abraham responds to God again with the phrase "Here I Am" as God stops Abraham from harming his son.

**Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, page 18

How might God be inviting me to partner with Him today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I want to learn how to trust You like Abraham did. I yield to You today without caution or reservation and I wholeheartedly say, 'Here I am'.

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:

*He 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.

February 08 2022 (click for audio)

Don't Be Afraod

Today is Tuesday the 8th of February. This week we're exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God in prayer. Together we are reflecting on seven people in the scriptures who responded to God with these three simple words: 'Here I am.'

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

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

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 27...

The Lord is my light and my salvation—

so why should I be afraid?

The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,

so why should I tremble?

Psalm 27:1 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on an extraordinary encounter Jacob has with God towards the end of his life...

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, 'Jacob! Jacob!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

'I am God, the God of your father,' he said. 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.'

Genesis 46:1-4 (NIV UK)

Jacob is a very old man at this moment in his story, but He has not stopped seeking God with all his heart. Even at such an old age, Jacob is still dreaming with God and daring to take huge risks to follow the Lord wherever He leads.

It can be easy for me to become passive in my pursuit of God.

Ask

Where is God calling me to take creative risks and follow him, like Jacob, with all my heart? I slow down and I imagine the Lord calling my name today, just like He spoke, 'Jacob, Jacob'.

I respond with faith and say: 'Here I am, wherever You lead me I will follow You'.

Pause and pray

I name a person who is in the later part of their life. I declare the hope of Joel 2:28 over them...

The Lord will pour out His Spirit upon You and You will dream new Dreams.

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 Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, 'Jacob! Jacob!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

'I am God, the God of your father,' he said. 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.'

Genesis 46:1-4 (NIV UK)

I am made in the image of God the Creator (Genesis 1:27) I am born to be creative, but what blocks this river of creativity in my life the most is fear.

I once heard fear described as an acronym: F.E.A.R. is False Evidence Appearing Real. But just like God spoke to Jacob, He is speaking to my heart today: 'Do not be afraid'.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Thank You Lord that Your perfect love destroys fear. I surrender to Your affection. Let the fear be displaced by Your love and let creativity flow like a river through my life.

Yielding Promise

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

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 09 2022 (click for audio)

Burning Bush

Today is Wednesday the 9th of February. This week we're exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God in prayer. Together we will reflect on seven people in the scriptures who responded to God with these three simple words: 'Here I am.'

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

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 19...

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world.*

Psalm 19:1-4a (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the encounter Moses had with God through a burning bush in the wilderness and how this moment changed Moses's life forever...

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'

And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'

Exodus 3:1-5 (NIVUK)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning said that the, "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God: But only he who sees, takes off his shoes, The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries,"* It's so easy to rush through life and miss all the ways God is speaking. What if I intentionally slowed down today and took off the 'shoes of hurry and busyness'?

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh (Smith, Elder and Co. 1980, digitized in 2015) p286

Ask

Holy Spirit, I welcome You into my life today. Help me slow down, so that I might encounter You. Open the eyes of my heart to see all the places You have crammed heaven into earth.

Pause and pray

Lord, I name someone who doesn't know You. I ask that in the midst of their wanderings they, like Moses, would have a 'burning bush' moment with You.

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...

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'

And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'

Exodus 3:1-5 (NIV UK)

God speaks to Moses through His creation and inspires deep and radical change in Moses' life. I love the way that God's creativity can inspire my creativity. How many artists have tried to capture the transcendent beauty of a sunset or the grandeur of the mountains with a paintbrush? How might God want to speak to me through His creation today and inspire fresh creativity in my life?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord help me pay attention to the way You are speaking to me through Your creation today. Just like Moses I choose to take a step closer to You and I yield my life to You by praying again, 'Here I am'.

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...

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.

Romans 1:20 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 10 2022 (click for audio)

Speak, God

Today is Thursday the 10th of February. This week we are exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God in prayer.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea.

The God of glory thunders.

The Lord thunders over the mighty sea.

The voice of the Lord is powerful;

the voice of the Lord is majestic.

Psalm 29:3-4 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the moment God called Samuel when he was just a young boy...

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, 'Here I am.'

1 Samuel 3:1-4 (NIV UK)

Pablo Picasso said, 'Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.'* I am inspired how the young Samuel responds to the voice of God without reservation. But I am deeply impacted by how Samuel cultivated this friendship with God his whole life. Even as an old man (1 Samuel 16) he had eyes of faith to see a king in a shepherd boy.

* Laurence J. Peter, Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time (Bantam Books, New York NY, USA 1977/1979), p25

Ask

Have I let childlike wonder grow dull in my life?

Holy Spirit, help me become like a little child today. Revive wonder and faith in my heart. Help me cultivate this friendship with You all the days of my life.

Pause and pray

I think of a few children I know.

Lord, I ask that You would pour Your Spirit over them today. Open their ears to hear You; open their eyes to see You.

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 boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, 'Here I am.'

1 Samuel 3:1-4 (NIV UK)

Everything in creation was made by the voice that spoke Samuel's name. Every mountain and every ocean; Every star and every atom, God's voice created. There is nothing with more creative power than the voice of the Lord. How much creativity might be unleashed within my life if I responded to God like Samuel and made his cry my prayer: 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I run to you Abba, Father like a child and I yield to you by repeating the words of Samuel with all my heart: 'Speak, for Your servant is listening'.

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 30:

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'

Isaiah 30:21 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

February 11 2022 (click for audio)

[Send Me](#)

Today is Friday the 11th of February. This week we are exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God in prayer.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

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 Psalm 85...

*I listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying,
for he speaks peace to his faithful people.
But let them not return to their foolish ways.
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
so our land will be filled with his glory.
Psalm 85:8-9 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a beautiful head-on collision the prophet Isaiah has with heaven...

*'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'*

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.'

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'

He said, 'Go and tell this people:'

Isaiah 6:3b-9a (NIV UK)

Prayer is meant to be a deeply personal interaction between God's heart and mine. It is an intimate conversation between heaven and earth where I am transformed. Just like the coal from heaven purified Isaiah lips, as I am in prayer today, I want the Lord to purify me, so that the words I speak create life.

Ask

Lord, let the fire of heaven touch my lips today and transform my judgments into intercession, my gossip into encouragement, my self-pity into praise and my complaining into gratitude.

Pause and pray

I think of a missionary who is living out the words of Isaiah: 'Here I am, send me'.

Lord, pour Your Spirit out upon them today and shine Your face upon their lives. Anoint the words of their mouth and bless the works of their hands.

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...

*'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'*

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.'

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'

He said, 'Go and tell this people:'

Isaiah 6:3b-9a (NIV UK)

What an extraordinary encounter Isaiah has with the Lord. He sees God's glory and hears God's voice. Then he boldly partners with God to bring heaven to earth by speaking God's words into the world. This reminds me of the first thing Adam did in the garden (Genesis 2:19), when He partnered with God by naming each of the animals. Just like God created with His voice, Adam's voice brought identity to the earth with the words He spoke.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I partner with You today. Just like Your words unleashed light into darkness, may my words bring heaven to earth.

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..

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

February 12 2022 (click for audio)

Chosen Instrument

Today is Saturday the 12th of February. This week we are exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God in prayer. Together we are reflecting on people who responded to God with three simple words: 'Here I am'.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Creator God, You called out to us in Eden, 'Where are You?' In this moment I respond to You by saying, 'Here I am'.

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 103...

*Let all that I am praise the Lord;
may I never forget the good things he does for me.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
Psalm 103:2-3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today we reflect on the astonishing story of when God asks a disciple named Ananias to go and pray for a dangerous man...

*Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."
And he said, "Here I am, Lord."
So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."
Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."
But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."
Acts 9:10-15 (NKJV)*

Partnering with God is not for the faint hearted. God loves doing the impossible and having us join Him in the adventure. I am provoked by the faith and courage of Ananias to go and pray for a man who was terrorizing the church.

How can I partner with God today to go and pray for someone like Saul?

Ask

Lord increase my faith today, that you want to do the impossible through my prayers. I want to see salvation like Ananias saw. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24 NKJV)

Pause and pray

Today I pray for a musician, an artist, an actor or another creative influencer who doesn't know Jesus yet. I declare salvation over their life. May they become a chosen instrument like Saul to proclaim God's name to the world.

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 certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."

Acts 9:10-15 (NKJV)

I think one of the most incredible displays of God's creative power is when He transforms a person into a new creation. God changes Saul from a persecutor of Jesus' followers, into one of the greatest apostles that will build His church. God could have done all this by Himself, but He chose to have Ananias partner with Him in this astonishing miracle.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*I yield with a prayer credited to St. Francis**

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

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

Yielding Promise

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

*He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!
Revelation 21:5 (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.

February 13 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 13th of February and this week we've been exploring how creativity can be unlocked in our lives through partnering with God.

As we bring this week to a close, we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath prayer.

'Forget the former things,' says the Lord, 'Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!' (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Pause and pray

This week I have been reflecting on six people in the Bible who responded to God with the words, 'Here I am'. Today, I make David's prayer in Psalm 40 my own:

*Sacrifice and offering you did not desire –
but my ears you have opened; –
burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come –
it is written about me in the scroll.
I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.'*
Psalm 40:6-8 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

'Sabbath,' writes John Koessler, 'affords a rest by which we are not so much restored as re-storied.'*

*John Koessler, *The Radical Pursuit of Jesus*, p.106

And so, as God's people gather around the world today, I pray for new chapters to be written in our Midst.

Father, re-story us today. We 'stand at the crossroads' and 'ask for the ancient paths' (Jeremiah 6:16). Root us in the faith of our fathers and mothers, as we participate this day in Your Word.

Jesus, maker of tables and teller of stories, create in us a new imagination, we pray. Invoke in us greater celebration. And grant to us new language with which to sow Your eternal Word into a tired world.

Creator Spirit, You who moved over the darkness and gave the chaos form, inspire new songs of worship. Disrupt our religious attitudes. Draw artists, prophets and innovators from the peripheries of our communities right to the heart.

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers personally in my own life. I name an artist or innovator I know and remember friends who are finding life particularly tough today.

Pause and pray

At the start of this new week, I ask God to help me live a celebratory life:

Thank You, Father, for the wonder, the beauty and complexity of Your creation.

Renew my soul this week to celebrate Your creativity.

Thank You, Jesus, for overcoming the dreariness of sin and making everything new.

Renew me this week, I pray, to live almost as beautifully as You.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for inspiring dreams and visions, imagination and innovation.

Give me a new mind this week to perceive fresh possibilities in ordinary things.

Pause and pray

Sabbath blessing

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

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

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

February 14 2022 (click for audio)

Your Valentine

It's Monday the 14th of February, the Feast of Saint Valentine, and today we are pausing our journey through Mark's Gospel to learn something from the life of the man who championed love, and to pray for everyone this Valentine's Day.

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

Thank You, Lord, that You are the source of all love. On this day when the world goes a little crazy celebrating romance, we remember Your friend Valentine, who knew the real meaning of love and gave today its name.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 34...

*Is anyone crying for help? GOD is listening,
ready to rescue you.
If your heart is broken, you'll find GOD right there;
if you're kicked in the gut, he'll help you catch your breath.
Disciples so often get into trouble;
still, GOD is there every time.
He's your bodyguard, shielding every bone;
not even a finger gets broken.*

Psalm 34:17–20 (MSG)

Pause and pray

It was on this day in AD 269 that Saint Valentine was martyred in Rome. It is thought that he was killed for preaching the gospel to Emperor Claudius and secretly marrying Christian couples. One legend records that he healed the blindness of his jailer's daughter and, knowing that he was about to be killed, left her a note simply signed, 'Your Valentine'. For many centuries, Valentine has been venerated as a hero of love – and particularly of romantic love, though he himself was unmarried.

The modern Valentine's Day, which takes its name from this hero of the faith, can be difficult. When I'm all loved-up and in a relationship it's easy to enjoy. But when I'm not, Valentine's Day, and all the commercial trappings that come with it, can be a day to dread.

Ask

So, on this day, I pause to pray for myself and for everyone I know with the words of Pete Greig's prayer for Valentine's Day*...

*Pete Greig, A Valentine Prayer, adapted

I pray today for those in love, those out of love, and those in between. I remember especially those who find themselves a little bit lonelier than normal.

I do not pray today for loved-up couples, exchanging overpriced flowers and foil-wrapped hearts, leaking pheromones like diesel fumes at candlelit dinners. I'm pretty sure, Lord, they will be OK (for now).

Instead, I hereby dedicate this happy-crappy day to all the brave teenagers who dared to send a card (hoping in vain with every fiber of their being for something back). Let them be a little bit more OK because I prayed.

I think of the mother, coping alone, who quietly bought herself flowers yesterday. Let her kids be kind today. Let her teenagers tidy their bedrooms. And if that's a miracle too far (I realize You've got a lot on in the world right now), could they at least initiate a hug at bedtime. And, Lord, let those daffodils she bought herself last longer and shine brighter than those overpriced red roses that also caught her eye.

Finally, I ask You to look upon the elderly gentleman gazing today at a fading sepia photograph in a silver frame of a wedding in another time. Look at him and look with him and be with him in the remembering and the unremembering too.

King of Love, on this day named after one of your unmarried saints, embrace the unlovely and the unloving parts of the world and of myself today.

Song of Songs, inspire surprising turns of phrase and simple thoughtful acts, scatter sparks and rekindle the fires of romance wherever marriages are mired in the mundane. Melt our tiny, tinny expensive chocolate hearts.

And forgive me today, I pray, for this cheap, gaudy, hysterical, isolating thing I have sometimes somehow tried to make of love and of You.

Amen.

Pause and pray

Yield

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:

*Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken...
Isaiah 54:10 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

February 15 2022 (click for audio)

Distracted by Mistakes

Today is Tuesday the 15th of February. This week we are returning to our series reflecting upon Jesus' call to "come, follow me" as revealed in the Gospel of Mark.

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

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

Today I choose to rejoice in God's remembrance, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 115...

The LORD remembers us and will bless us.

*He will bless the people of Israel
and bless the priests, the descendants of Aaron.
He will bless those who fear the LORD,
both great and lowly.*

Psalm 115:12-13 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus' disciples have recently witnessed two miraculous events where Jesus transformed meager amounts of bread into food for thousands of people. Now, traveling with Jesus, the disciples are checking their supplies for the journey...

The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 'Be careful,' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.' They discussed this with one another and said, 'It is because we have no bread.'

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

Mark 8:14-18 (NIV UK)

Jesus expects the disciples to have learned the lesson by now: He can easily provide for them! And yet by obsessing over their failure to pack enough food, they are missing the greater lesson He is trying to teach them.

I wonder how the disciples felt having been rebuked by Jesus in this way? If it was me, I think I would've felt a bit ashamed.

Ask

Do I let shame over my mistakes distract me from hearing what God is saying to me?

Lord, I chose to trust in your complete forgiveness. Help me to stop replaying the guilt of the past and instead to listen for Your voice today.

Pause and pray

God, I name someone I know who feels that they are 'not enough'; that they lack the money or talent or charisma to be used by You. May they be reminded today of how You multiplied loaves to feed multitudes and trust You to do the same in their lives.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 'Be careful,' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.' They discussed this with one another and said, 'It is because we have no bread.'

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

Mark 8:14-18 (NIV UK)

The Pharisees were hardliners, harshly judging anyone who they felt didn't measure up. King Herod was a puppet of the Roman occupiers, compromising on what was right, to avoid rocking the boat.

Lord, where I am like the Pharisees, believing myself to be better than others, I repent.

And where I am like King Herod, turning a blind eye to what I know to be wrong, I repent.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I am grateful for Your patience and for Your forgiveness. Thank you that your mercies are new every morning and nothing in my past, no mistake or misunderstanding, defines my present in You.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Acts 13...

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
Acts 13:19 (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.

February 16 2022 (click for audio)

The Lesson Is Simple

Today is Wednesday the 16th of February. This week we are continuing to reflect upon Jesus' call to "come, follow me" as revealed in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Your faithfulness extends to every generation,
as enduring as the earth you created.
Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves your plans.*

Psalm 119:90-91 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Traveling with Jesus, the disciples are embarrassed to realize they have forgotten to bring enough food for the journey. They are expecting to be told off but, instead, Jesus asks them to cast their minds back...

'When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?'

'Twelve,' they replied.

'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?'

'They answered, 'Seven.'

'He said to them, 'Do you still not understand?'

'Mark 8:19-21 (NIV UK)

Jesus is not upset that His followers forgot to pack a proper lunch! He's pointing out how quickly they've forgotten God's love for them and His ability to provide for them. That they expect a telling off, instead of trusting in God's goodness, seems to bother Jesus.

Am I just as quick to forget the times when I have experienced God's goodness?

Ask

God, I remember a time when You were especially good to me.

Thank You, Lord. Help me to learn the lesson that You love me and trust You to provide what I need.

Pause and pray

God, I bring before You now situations of famine around the world – thinking in particular about the crisis in Ethiopia, in Yemen and Afghanistan. Break hearts and shatter the strongholds of war to allow food and supplies into these regions. In Jesus' name, get them to the people who need them – and Soon.

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 I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?'

'Twelve,' they replied.

'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?'

'They answered, 'Seven.'

'He said to them, 'Do you still not understand?'

Mark 8:19-21 (NIV UK)

For Jesus, the lesson is simple: God is powerful and easily able to provide for us. Yet the disciples had not yet grasped it.

What 'simple truths' about God, or myself, do I struggle to accept?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, where my mind and heart doubt Your promises, calm them and help me to trust You. Teach me to see You as You really are, and see myself as You see 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 Proverbs 3:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;*

*in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 (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.

February 17 2022 (click for audio)

Messy Miracles

Today is Thursday the 17th of February. This week we are continuing to reflect upon Jesus' call to "come, follow me" as revealed in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

Come, let us worship and bow down.

*Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,
for he is our God.*

*We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.*

Psalm 95:6-7a (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a beautiful – yet very unusual – miracle Jesus performed...

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, 'Do you see anything?' He looked up and said, 'I see people; they look like trees walking around.'

Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Don't even go into the village.'

Mark 8:22-26 (NIV UK)

I'm used to stories of Jesus healing people with a word and doing so in an instant... but that's not what happens here. Jesus takes his time over this miracle; it's a messy, tactile, encounter, where the healing happens in stages.

If I'm honest, which parts of my life look messy right now? Which parts am I longing to see Jesus transform?

Ask

Lord Jesus, I hold before You the wounded areas of my life – be they physical, emotional or relational. Continue to meet me in the midst of my messy reality and lead me on the path to wholeness in You.

Pause and pray

Who do I know who is living with the pain of partially answered, or unanswered prayer?

Lord, I hold them before You now. I ask that, like the man in this story, they will encounter You in an intimate and life-changing way today.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, 'Do you see anything?' He looked up and said, 'I see people; they look like trees walking around.' Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Don't even go into the village.'

Mark 8:22-26 (NIV UK)

I can get impatient with God. I want miracles and I want them now! This encounter reminds me that God is not in a rush. The intimacy this man shares with Jesus – the hand-in-hand journey, the level of touch and connection – would not have happened in a quicker, less-messy experience.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I lay down my desire for quick and easy transformation. Instead of demanding instant results, teach me to move at Your pace and enjoy Your friendship as we journey through life together.

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:

[Be] confident of this, that he 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.

February 18 2022 (click for audio)

Who Do You Say I Am?

Today is Friday the 18th of February. This week we are continuing to reflect upon Jesus' call to "come, follow me" as revealed in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

Psalm 62:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

In the middle of an ordinary country walk, Jesus suddenly asks his disciples a bombshell question...

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'

They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'

'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Mark 8:27-30 (NIV UK)

It's a question every would-be follower of Jesus must face: 'Who do you say I am?' I think back to the first time I could answer it for myself – Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior, the anointed Son of God!

But do I still feel the same sense of wonder today? Or has my response to Jesus become muted, dulled by over-familiarity?

Ask

Lord, thank You for revealing to me the glory of who You are. Refresh my sense of wonder today so that my knowledge of You may continue to transform my life.

Pause and pray

Those who described Jesus as a Prophet or a Holy Man were not wrong. They simply had an incomplete picture of who He is. Who do I know that admires Jesus but doesn't acknowledge Him as God?

Lord, I thank You today for those who already have a partial understanding of You. I ask you to complete their picture, that they too may come to call You Messiah.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'

They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'

'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Mark 8:27-30 (NIV UK)

It's easy to say: 'Of course Jesus is the Messiah!', but it's harder to let that fact impact the way I live. In confirming His identity, the disciples understood that following Jesus would demand everything from them. If I am not willing to change what I do with my time, or how I spend my money, am I really following Jesus in my every day?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, show me afresh what it means to acknowledge You as Messiah today. Holy Spirit, make me aware of the attitudes, habits and beliefs You would like me to change. Lord, reign in me today.

Yielding Promise

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

...he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

February 19 2022 (click for audio)

Rebuking A Friend

Today is Saturday the 19th of February. This week we are continuing to reflect upon Jesus' call to "come, follow me" as revealed in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.
He teaches them his covenant.
My eyes are always on the LORD,
for he rescues me from the traps of my enemies.
Psalm 25:14-15 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Yesterday the disciple Peter became the first person to declare that Jesus was the long foretold Messiah! But after this moment of spiritual insight, Peter comes back down to earth with a bump, as Jesus unpacks what His Messiah-ship will mean...

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'
Mark 8:31-33 (NIV UK)

Ouch! It's a stinging rebuke and Jesus does nothing to soften the blow... but He trusts that His relationship with Peter is strong enough to withstand hearing such unvarnished truth.

Do I have people in my life who love me and who I trust to tell me the truth when I need to hear it? True friends who won't try to flatter me, but who will simply tell it like it is?

Ask

Lord, surround me with people who love me and who are unafraid to tell me the truth. Develop in me the humility to listen and the wisdom to recognize when I need to change my ways.

Pause and pray

I pray for my Christian sisters and brothers working in politics and justice today. Fill them afresh with your Spirit to be courageous in speaking truth to power.

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 then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'

Mark 8:31-33 (NIV UK)

Peter doesn't like the idea of his friend suffering and so he wants to stop it. What's the harm in that? But in trying to talk Jesus away from the sacrificial path, he is unwittingly promoting Satan's agenda.

When I'm concerned about my loved ones, am I too quick to leap in and offer well-intentioned solutions instead of first listening and seeking God's wisdom?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, when those I love face difficulties, I commit to bringing them to You in prayer before offering my own advice. Fill me with Your wisdom that I might speak Your life-giving words to them.

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 1:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5 (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.

February 20 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 20th of February, and like every Sunday we take a break from our usual rhythm of Pausing, Rejoicing and Reflecting, Asking and Yielding to pray the Bible and embrace a day of rest.

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

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

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

Pause and pray

I make this prayer of contentment from Psalm 131 my own:

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

Psalm 131:1-3 (NIV UK)

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

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

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

Pause and pray

I dedicate the coming week to Jesus:

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

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

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

Sabbath blessing

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

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

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

February 21 2022 (click for audio)

Who's Driving?

Today is Monday the 21st of February, and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and listening for his call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

Psalm 23:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on some deeply challenging words from Jesus...

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'

Mark 8:34-9:1 (NIV UK)

It turns out that following Jesus means more than I thought. It's about picking up my cross, denying myself and giving over control of my life to Jesus. Eugene Peterson paraphrases Jesus' words like this:

'Anyone who intends to come after me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am... What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you?' (Mark 8:34, MSG)

Ask

In what areas of my life am I gripping the steering wheel; reluctant to let Jesus into the driving seat? Perhaps it's my finances, or my politics, or my relationships, or something else?

As I name these areas before God, I imagine climbing out of my car and inviting Jesus to take my place in the driving seat.

Pause and pray

Lord Jesus, I ask the same for my church community too. It's not actually 'my church', of course. And it's not even ours either – it belongs to You. You are the head of the church(Colossians 1:18, NIVUK)- and so I ask You to lead us. Help us to follow You in all that we 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 he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'

Mark 8:34-9:1 (NIV UK)

Following Jesus requires me to make meaningful changes to my life; unlike when I follow someone on Instagram, TikTok or YouTube (from the comfort of my chair), following Jesus means living His way instead of my way. 'Lose your life for me,' He says, 'and you will save it.'

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I yield control to You. I choose to lose my life for You, in a hundred little ways today, that I may experience 'life to the full' in ways that only You can give to 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 John's Gospel that...

...the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; [He has] come that [I] may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 22 2022 (click for audio)

Let It Shine

Today is Tuesday the 22nd of February, and this week we are responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him by praying through His life as told in the Gospel of Mark.

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

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's love, which gives life and light, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 36...

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

Pause and pray

Today, and for the next two days, I am reflecting on one of the strangest and most extraordinary stories found in the Gospel narratives...

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not

know what to say, they were so frightened.)

Mark 9:2-6 (NIV UK)

Moses represented the law, and Elijah represented the prophets. Together they represented the Old Testament; the Old Covenant; and here they were appearing before a glorified Jesus. Something new was taking place.

The disciples would almost certainly have understood the symbolism and the significance of this moment, but they were frightened and didn't know what to say. Perhaps predictably, it was Peter who opened his mouth and said something anyway.

Ask

I often don't know what to say when I've set aside time to talk with Jesus. I get tongue-tied and I can't find the right words.

Lord Jesus, help me to open my mouth and say something anyway, just like Peter. I'm grateful that You invite me to come to You in prayer 'as simply and honestly as I can manage' (Matthew 6:6 MSG).

Pause and pray

Lord Jesus, I bring to You those I know who find prayer especially difficult for whatever reason. I ask You to draw near to them and help them to draw near to 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...

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

Mark 9:2-6 (NIV UK)

In Luke's account of this story, he says that Moses and Elijah appeared in glorious splendor' (Luke 9:30, NIVUK). It's unlikely that I will ever appear in glorious splendor quite like Moses and Elijah, but as a follower of Jesus, I carry His light wherever I go, and He calls me to let it shine (Matthew 5:16, NIVUK).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

And so, as I yield myself to Jesus, the Light of the World, I use the words of a well known 1920s gospel song as my prayer*.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine.

*attributed to Harry Dixon Loes, This Little Light of Mine, <https://artandtheology.org/2020/02/04/this-little-light-of-mine-artful-devotion/>

Yielding Promise

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

as I let my light shine before others, they will see my good deeds and glorify my Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16 (NIV UK, adapted)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 23 2022 (click for audio)

Here and There

Today is Wednesday the 23rd of February, and this week we are responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him by praying through His life as told in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 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 am continuing to reflect on the transfiguration of Jesus, and in particular the parallels between this and His death, which took place not long afterwards...

Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what 'rising from the dead' meant.

Mark 9:7-10 (NIV UK)

Here on a mountainside, Jesus is revealed in glory, while on Golgotha - 'skull hill' - he will be revealed in shame as he hangs on a cross. (Mark 15)

Here, his clothes are dazzling white. There, his clothes will be stripped away.

Here, he appears with Moses and Elijah. There, two criminals will be crucified on either side of Him.

Here, a bright cloud surrounds them all. There, thick darkness will cover the land as He dies.

Here, God's voice announces, 'This is my Son.' There, it will be a Roman soldier who acknowledges, 'surely, this was the Son of God.'*

*adapted from Tom Wright, 'Matthew for Everyone', p.14

Ask

Am I more comfortable with the 'glorified' Jesus or the 'suffering' Jesus? When I talk with Jesus, which Jesus am I picturing?

Jesus, I ask You to show me new things about who You are, especially things I have been afraid to accept until now.

Pause and pray

As they went down the mountainside, Jesus instructed the disciples to not tell anyone about what they'd seen. Following His resurrection however, He instructed His disciples (including me) to go and tell the world! (Mark 16:15)

Lord Jesus, I pray for the churches in my area, that we would be courageous in telling people about You.

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...

Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what 'rising from the dead' meant.

Mark 9:7-10 (NIV UK)

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

I noticed the phrase, 'they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus'. When the cloud lifted and the voice from within it went quiet; when Moses and Elijah departed and the vision faded; the disciples only saw Jesus.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I want to only see You. Help me not to be attracted to, or distracted by, anything other than You. Whether what's happening around me is ordinary or extraordinary, I want to only see 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 Isaiah:

*You will keep in perfect peace
all who trust in you,
all whose thoughts are fixed on you!
Isaiah 26:3-4 (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.

February 24 2022 (click for audio)

God's Timetable

Today is Thursday the 24th of February, and this week we are responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him by praying through His life as told in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice that God can be found by those who search, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 9...

*But the Lord reigns forever,
executing judgment from his throne.
He will judge the world with justice
and rule the nations with fairness.
The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble.
Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, O Lord, do not abandon those who search for you.*
Psalm 9:7-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Peter, James and John had just seen Jesus transfigured and they were still a bit confused. Today I am reflecting on their conversation as they headed back down the mountain...

And they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.'
Mark 9:11-13 (NIV UK)

In an attempt to figure out when the Messiah would arrive, the teachers of the law had developed a timetable, based on their understanding of the scriptures. The prophet Malachi had predicted that God would first 'send... the prophet Elijah' (Malachi 4:5, NIV UK).

But John the Baptist hadn't been the Elijah that anyone was expecting, just as Jesus wasn't the Messiah that anyone was expecting. The teachers of the law, and even the disciples, weren't looking in the right way, or looking in the right places.

Ask

I remember that Jesus often urged his followers to have 'eyes to see and ears to hear'.

Lord Jesus, I ask You to open my eyes to see where You are and what You are doing; and open my ears to hear what You are saying. Don't let my wrong expectations prevent me from encountering You today.

Pause and pray

People all over the world are still hoping and longing for a Messiah, whether they call him that or not – they're searching for a savior.

Lord Jesus, make Yourself known. Reveal Yourself in dreams and through the scriptures, through the experience of miracles and the hearing of stories.

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 they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.'
Mark 9:11-13 (NIV UK)

'The timetable of what God is doing in the world is going ahead,' says the theologian Tom Wright. 'If we want to play our part in it, we must follow where Jesus himself leads: along the way of the cross, of self-renunciation and service. After all, the most important event in the timetable has already occurred. Jesus himself was raised from the dead, the secret is out, and all of history is now bathed in the Easter light.*

*Tom Wright, 'Matthew for Everyone', p.19

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I like to have a timetable. I like to know what's going on, what I'm supposed to be doing, where I'm supposed to be going. But I yield all of this to You – I relinquish my 'need to know' - and I say again that I trust You. I choose to follow where You lead.

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 32:

I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.

I will advise you and watch over you.

Psalm 32:8 (NLT)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 25 2022 (click for audio)

Unbelieving Generation!

Today is Friday the 25th of February, and for the final time this week we are listening out for Jesus' invitation to follow Him as we explore His life as told in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 37...

Trust in the Lord and do good.

Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

Take delight in the Lord,

and he will give you your heart's desires.

Commit everything you do to the Lord.

Trust him, and he will help you.

Psalm 37:3-5 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I am reflecting on what happened immediately after Jesus' transfiguration, when he went back down the mountain with Peter, James and John...

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

'What are you arguing with them about?' he asked.

A man in the crowd answered, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.'

'You unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put

up with you? Bring the boy to me.'

Mark 9:14-19 (NIV UK)

Jesus' disciples had done this kind of thing before. They'd prayed for the sick and they'd driven out evil spirits, but on this occasion, something wasn't working, and they couldn't figure it out.

Jesus tells them that it's because of their lack of faith (Matthew 17:20, NIV UK). In Matthew's version of this story, Jesus goes on to talk with the disciples about having faith, even faith as small as a mustard seed.

Ask

Lord Jesus, I could have mountains of faith in myself, but it wouldn't be enough to move even a mustard seed. And yet a mustard seed of faith in You is enough to move a mountain. I ask You to help me keep the faith that I have, however small it feels, firmly planted in You.

Pause and pray

In today's story, an evil spirit caused the boy's seizures. I know that people suffer with seizures for all sorts of other reasons. Perhaps there's someone I know who suffers in this way?

Lord Jesus, I pray for those suffering with seizures of any kind. I ask You to heal them completely. And I also pray for medical professionals who work in this field, researching seizures and developing treatments. Inspire them and give them strength.

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 they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

'What are you arguing with them about?' he asked.

A man in the crowd answered, 'Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.'

'You unbelieving generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.'

Mark 9:14-19 (NIV UK)

Eugene Peterson paraphrases the final lines of today's passage like this, 'What a generation! No sense of God!' Is there a particular generation that God has placed on my heart? I pause for a moment to pray that they would sense God in new ways.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I am deeply challenged by what I've read and heard. Sometimes, I've not exercised faith in You at all. And at other times I've put what faith I do have in the wrong things. I surrender all of this to You, and I ASK You to grow new shoots of faith in my life.

Yielding Promise

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

'if [I] have faith as small as a mustard seed, [I] can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for [me].

Matthew 17:20 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

February 26 2022 (click for audio)

Florence Li Tim-Oi, Hero of Mission

Today is Saturday the 26th of February, Feast of Reverend Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion who died on this day in 1992.

Pause

On Feast Days we pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Florence Li-Tim-Oi, a pioneering hero of mission.

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's goodness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 116...

*Let my soul be at rest again,
for the Lord has been good to me.
He has saved me from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling.
And so I walk in the Lord's presence
as I live here on earth!
Psalm 116:7-9 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Li Tim-Oi was born in Hong Kong in 1907, but when she was baptized as a student, she chose the name Florence in honor of Florence Nightingale. After completing her theological studies she served in a lay capacity in churches in Kowloon and Macau, in northern Hong Kong.

In May 1941, Florence was ordained as a deaconess. Months later, Hong Kong fell to Japanese invaders, which meant that priests couldn't travel to the north of Hong Kong to celebrate the Eucharist with their congregations.

Florence continued her ministry over this period, and her work came to the attention of Bishop Hall in Hong Kong, who decided that even though he was not in favor of women becoming priests, it would be beneficial for the congregations in the north for Florence to be ordained as priest so that they could take communion together. She was ordained as the first female priest on 25 January 1944.

Just two years later, Florence was asked to travel to Hong Kong and was informed that Bishop Hall had broken church canon law in priesting a woman and had been denounced by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Either Bishop Hall would have to step down as bishop, or Florence would have to give up her title of priest.

In her memoir, Florence wrote about this moment:

‘When first told of this problem I was quite perturbed. I gave serious thought as to whether I should step down or stay on. Through a moment of deep meditation in which I prayed for God’s guidance, and the constant working of the Holy Spirit, I suddenly saw the light. I realized that I should see my personal prestige as worthless, for I was merely a small servant of the Lord.’*

*Florence Li Tim-Oi, *Memoirs: Raindrops of My Life*, cited in a Sermon for the Commemoration of the Rev. Dr. Li Tim-Oi, All Saints’ Chinese Church, Toronto, 5 May 2002

<https://www.anglican.ca/faith/worship/resources/li-tim-oi/matthews/>

Even though she decided to give up her priest title, Florence continued to commit herself to a life of seeking and following Jesus, even during China’s Cultural Revolution where she faced challenges because of her faith.

Ask

Is there an area of my life or my faith where I am striving for status or a title; where my ‘personal prestige’ has taken priority over serving Jesus?

Pause and pray

Florence Li Tim-Oi faced suffering because she followed Jesus. Today, Christians all over the world are persecuted and imprisoned for their faith in Jesus.

Lord, draw near to them today. Strengthen and equip them during their pain; be their light and their guide.

Pause and pray

Yield

It wasn’t until 1984, 40 years after her original ordination, that Florence Li Tim-Oi was officially reinstated as a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, where she spent the remainder of her life serving. In the ‘tenth anniversary celebration of Ordination of Women to Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada’, she wrote:

‘Women have the responsibility of being messengers of Christianity and social development and they constitute a rich human resource. They can truly hold up “half the earth.”’**

** Edmund Dur, "A Bibliographical Review of Resources on the Life of Florence Tim Oi Li (1907-1992)." *Anglican and Episcopal History*, vol. 67, no. 2, Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, 1998, pp. 227-37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42611936>

As a lay person, as a priest, and in the midst of the challenges that she faced, Florence's faith in Jesus was unwavering and her aim remained the same; to serve Jesus faithfully.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I pray a prayer from the Episcopal church lectionary:

*Almighty God, grant that [I], following the example of your servant Florence Li Tim-Oi, chosen priest in your church, may with faithfulness, patience, and tenacity proclaim your holy gospel to all the nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.****

***<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/florence-li-tim-oi/>

Yielding Promise

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

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)

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.

February 27 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 27th of February, and today we are taking a break from our usual rhythm to pray a special Sabbath prayer.

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

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

Prayer of Approach

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

Pause and pray

I've been learning from the life of Jesus again this week and reflecting on the invitation to follow Him; to join in with His mission to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Today, however, I stop all my striving and I make space for the Lord to preach the gospel to me, to come and save me. Sunday is a day to be born again – again! And so, I take time now to get right with God, to repent of my sins, to give thanks for the cross, and to receive the Spirit once more.

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV UK)

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

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

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

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

Pause and pray

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

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

Please help me to love the world with extraordinary generosity.

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

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

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

Please fill me now with that same boldness this week.

Pause and pray

Sabbath blessing

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

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

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

February 28 2022 (click for audio)

Faith And Doubt

It's Monday the 28th of February. Today and tomorrow we will be reflecting on the final passages in our series exploring Mark's Gospel. Together we will listen to Jesus' words and respond to His invitation to follow Him.

Pause

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

Pause and Pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today, would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honor come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.*

Psalm 62:5-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on the story of a dad desperate to see his son freed from an evil spirit. The disciples' prayers have been ineffective, so the boy has been brought to Jesus...

So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he answered. 'It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.' "If you can?" said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes.' Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' Mark 9:20-24 (NIV UK)

I wonder how many times this dad had tried to find help for his son? Had his faith taken a beating from multiple moments of daring to hope, only to be disappointed? When he came face to face with Jesus, he seemed willing to try anything. In his desperation, in a maelstrom of doubt and hope, he makes one of the most honest and courageous pleas recorded in the Bible: 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'

Ask

Am I struggling to have faith for something right now? Maybe something I've been praying and hoping for a long time.

Jesus, I bring this situation to You again and pray, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'

Pause and pray

I pray now for a parent or a guardian I know who, like the dad in this story, is caring for a child. Maybe a child with long-term health problems or significant additional needs.

Jesus, give them strength, hope and fresh faith today. Show them 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...

So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, 'How long has he been like this?'

'From childhood,' he answered. 'It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.'

"'If you can'?" said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes.'

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'

Mark 9:20-24 (NIV UK)

Jesus doesn't reject this dad's request, even though the man has doubts. Instead, Jesus takes the small and shaky faith that he already has, and with it, weaves new possibilities for this broken family.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I long to see the new possibilities You could weave through my life and my world. Today I choose to put my trust in You – however small and shaky my faith may feel. Teach me to pray honest and courageous prayers.

Yielding Promise

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

I can cast all my anxieties on him because he cares for me.

Adapted from 1 Peter 5:7 (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.