

LECTIO 365 Day Prayers

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

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

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

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

April 2022

April 1	April 2	April 3	April 4
April 5	April 6	April 7	April 8
April 9	April 10	April 11	April 12
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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

Month of April 2022

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

April 01 2022

Trusting Mercy

Today is Friday the 1st of April and this week we are continuing our Lent series, journeying with Jesus towards the cross.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for
Rejoice and Reflect

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

*For the word of the Lord holds true,
and we can trust everything he does.
He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.
Psalm 33:4-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus has been betrayed by His disciple Judas, arrested, put on trial and condemned to death. Today, I reflect on Judas's reaction to the consequences of his betrayal...

*Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.
When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'
'What is that to us?' they replied. 'That's your responsibility.'
So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.
Matthew 27:1-5 (NIV UK)*

The tragedy in these verses is haunting. Not just the death of Judas, but the failure of the priests to

fulfill their spiritual responsibility. Caught up in their own fear, focused on protecting their religious systems and political interests, they answer Judas's plea for help with a complete lack of compassion and mercy; abdicating one of the most important purposes of their priestly position: to help remove the burden of guilt.

Ask

Jesus, search my heart. Is there any area in my life where I have embraced a fear-fueled narrative or chosen self-interest? Show me where I am not thinking, speaking or acting as an agent of your love and mercy.

Pause and pray

Jesus, I pray now for anyone in my community who is struggling with suicidal thoughts. Meet with them now, bring them comfort and hope,

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'

'What is that to us?' they replied. 'That's your responsibility.'

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Matthew 27:1-5 (NIV UK)

Some theologians believe that Judas didn't set out to betray Jesus but instead to manipulate Him into being the Messiah Judas thought He should be. When Judas realized his manipulation was actually a betrayal, he was full of remorse. Might his story have ended differently if Judas had decided to ask for the mercy of Jesus and trust in His forgiveness?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, help me to more fully trust You, in Your mercy and forgiveness. I choose to rest in the transforming work of Your Spirit.

Yielding Promise

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

*No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.
My body rests in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.
You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.
Psalm 16:9-11 (NLT)*

Closing prayer

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

April 02 2022 (click for audio)

Appearances or Integrity?

Today is Saturday the 2nd of April and this week we are continuing our Lent series on The Passion, journeying with Jesus towards the cross.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*I will bless the Lord who guides me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I know the Lord is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.
Psalm 16:7-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, we return to the tragic story of Judas and the chief priests responsible for the arrest of Jesus. Judas has ended his own life while the priests have done nothing to help him...

*The chief priests picked up the coins and said, 'It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me'.
Matthew 27:6-10 (NIV UK)*

The chief priests can't put the thirty pieces of silver they had bribed Judas with into the Temple treasury because it is now connected with the conviction of an innocent man. So instead, they use it to buy the field in which Judas has died. Because the money was Judas', it is recorded as his field (Acts 1:18-19) though the transaction is carried out by the chief priests. In this way they can benefit from the money without being directly associated with it.

Ask

Jesus, I can sometimes be like the Chief Priests. I am often more concerned about how I appear to others than I am about what is going on inside my own heart. Forgive me, Jesus. I welcome the transforming work of Your Spirit now.

Pause and pray

Father, help us as Your Church to let go of our obsession with appearances. Teach us instead, to live lives of integrity, transparency, kindness, and justice. How can my community act with greater Integrity?

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 chief priests picked up the coins and said, 'It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.

Matthew 27:6-10 (NIV UK)

The chief priests were so careful to keep this one law, yet they seem oblivious to the greater injustice they're committing. It reminds me of Jesus' challenge to them: 'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness.' (Matthew 23:23a NIV)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I can sometimes be self-righteous about one thing yet be blind to areas within my heart that don't reflect Yours. Make me more like You, Jesus, that my life would reflect Your justice, mercy and love to others.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 25:

*He leads the humble in doing right,
teaching them his way.*

*The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness
all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.
Psalm 25:9-10 (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.

April 03 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Lent

Today is Sunday the 3rd of April, a day of rest on which we interrupt our weekday pattern with a shorter, simpler time of prayer.

During the season of Lent, Sundays are considered a day off in anticipation of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday, just two weeks away today. Throughout the past week we have explored Jesus' Passion in the book of Matthew, but today we anticipate and celebrate the living Lord Jesus Christ who makes all things new...

'Sabbath is not primarily about [me] or how it benefits [me];' writes the author Eugene Peterson, 'it is about God and how God forms [me]. It is not, in the first place, about what [I] do or don't do; it is about God completing and resting and blessing and sanctifying. It means stopping and being quiet long enough to see, open-eyed with wonder – resurrection wonder*

* Eugene Peterson, Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places (p.116-117)

Reflecting on Jesus' death and resurrection, the Apostle Paul writes:

*Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!
Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

Father God, thank You that you gave your only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He is risen! I am risen! Hallelujah!

Pause and pray

Jesus, You are the Living One; You were dead, and now look, You are alive for ever and ever! And behold, You are making all things new. You are risen! I am risen! Hallelujah!

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, thank You that You, the same Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead, lives in me today, giving life to my mortal body. He is risen! I am risen! Hallelujah!

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to root these prayers in my life and my community. I pray now for someone I know who needs to experience resurrection life today.

Pause and pray

Paul goes on to say in Philippians:

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name above every other name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the Glory of God the Father.
(Phil 2:9-11 NIV UK)*

He is risen!

I am risen!

Hallelujah!

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, A Sabbath Blessing, www.petegreig.info

April 04 2022 (click for audio)

Suffering In Silence

Today is Monday the 4th of April and this week we are continuing our Lent series, meditating on Jesus' journey to the cross. Together we are reflecting on Matthew's account of The Passion, and preparing our hearts for Easter.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's justice today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 9...

*...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.
Psalm 9:7-9 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus has been betrayed by one of His disciples, arrested and falsely accused by Jewish leaders, and is now on trial before a Roman ruler in Jerusalem...

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'
'You have said so,' Jesus replied.
When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, 'Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?' But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor.
Matthew 27:11-14 (NIV UK)

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead and they wanted the Romans to do their dirty work. Yet, despite the injustice of the trial and the lethal consequences of a guilty verdict, Jesus would not defend Himself. As Isaiah prophesied centuries before this moment, 'He was oppressed and afflicted,

yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.' (Isaiah 53:7 NIVUK)

Ask

Lord Jesus, I enter into this story and imagine myself standing with You before Your accusers. I join You in Your silence; I close my mouth and quiet my mind...

Pause and pray

Today, one in seven Christians are persecuted around the world. The organization Open Doors reports that last year almost 6000 of my brothers and sisters were killed for their faith.*

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

Jesus, I pray for my brothers and sisters. Renew their strength and remind them that they follow a Saviour who sees and understands their suffering.

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...

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'

'You have said so,' Jesus replied.

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, 'Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?' But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor.

Matthew 27:11-14 (NIV UK)

Jesus resigned Himself to losing this trial because His attention was on a far greater struggle. He willingly allowed events to play out, surrendering the battle for his life, all so that he could win the war for the world.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, Your selflessness astounds me. At any point You could have stopped Your execution, but You chose to give everything You had, even Your life, to save me. Teach me to subvert my own selfishness. I want to give away a little more of myself for You today.

Yielding Promise

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

...I have a Priest-Friend in the presence of the Father: Jesus Christ, righteous Jesus. When he served as a sacrifice for my sins, he solved the sin problem for good—not only mine, but the whole world's.

Adapted into the first person from 1 John 2:1b-2 (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

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

Pandita Ramabai: Hero of Justice

Today is Tuesday the 5th of April, feast of the pioneer educator and activist Pandita Ramabai, who died on this day in 1922. On Feast Days we pause from our usual **P.R.A.Y.** rhythms to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: **Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission.** Today therefore we are thanking God for the inspiring example of Pandita Ramabai, 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 choose to rejoice in God's care for the vulnerable today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 34...

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;

he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

The righteous person faces many troubles,

but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.

Psalm 34:17-19 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Ramabai Dongre was born in India in 1858. Her father was a dedicated Hindu who defied the conventions of his time by teaching his daughter to read Sanskrit. The family lived as pilgrims, reading Sanskrit manuscripts in public places, so people could hear the stories of the gods. Tragically, when famine struck India in 1876, Ramabai lost her father, mother and sister to starvation. She and her brother continued their life as pilgrims, but Ramabai became increasingly dissatisfied with what she read in the Hindu scriptures, and the inequality she saw between castes and between men and women in her society.

At 20 years old, Ramabai became the first Indian woman to be granted the title Pandita, or 'learned master', in recognition of her ability as a Sanskrit scholar, and at 22, she married and moved to Silchar. While living there, Pandita Ramabai came across a Bengali translation of Luke's Gospel and began to read it with interest. In 1883 she took the opportunity to travel to England in the hope of a medical education. Though, sadly, she was unable to study medicine, she was able to learn much about the Christian faith. Pandita Ramabai was deeply impacted by the work of the Sisters of the Cross, who cared for 'fallen women'. She had never seen such kindness extended to women of a similar situation in India. Moved by a faith that gives hope to the most vulnerable, and a Saviour who lifts up the downtrodden, she decided to be baptized.

Over the following eight years Pandita Ramabai traveled the UK and the USA, teaching, learning about Christianity and studying the Bible...

In her autobiography she writes:

*One thing I knew by this time: I needed Christ and not merely His religion... The Bible says that God does not wait for me to merit His love but heaps it upon me without my deserving it. It says also that there is neither male nor female in Christ... How good, how indescribably good! What good news for me a woman, a woman born in India among Brahmans who hold out no hope for me and the like of me! The Bible declares that Christ did not reserve this great salvation for a particular caste or sex. **

*Pandita Ramabai, An Honorable Heritage: The Pandita Ramabai Story in her Own Words(ebook, Community Christian Ministries, 2019), pp 27, 28, 30-31.

Ask

I am struck by Pandita Ramabai's realization that she needed, 'Christ and not merely His religion.' Am I going through the motions of religion right now, or am I seeking the Christ who heaps love on me?

Pause and pray

Yield

During her time in the USA Pandita Ramabai's thoughts and prayers were turned towards India. She wrote:

*I questioned in my mind over and over again, why some missionaries did not come forward to found faith missions in India. Then the Lord said to me, 'Why don't you begin to do this yourself, instead of wishing for others to do it? How easy it is for anyone to wish that someone else would do a difficult thing, instead of doing it himself.' I was greatly rebuked by the 'Still Small Voice' which spoke to me. ***

**Ibid, p. 36.

Pandita Ramabai took God's challenge seriously. In 1889 she returned to India and founded Mukti Mission, trusting God for all she needed. She founded a school for women in Bombay (now known as Mumbai), and then moved to Poona. As well as advocating for the rights of women, Pandita Ramabai

began a home that grew to serve and educate over 1,500 people. The Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission still exists today providing education, safe homes and dignity to women and children, regardless of their caste, creed, religion or status.

Is there an injustice or a people group that I, like Pandita Ramabai, have been bringing to God in prayer? God, how can I turn my prayers into action? How can I be part of Your answer to my prayers?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, it's easy to look at the life of Pandita Ramabai and think she achieved so much because she was someone special. Yet she, like me, was only human. She was loved by You and willing to use her skills, her intellect and her faith to demonstrate Your love to the most vulnerable. Jesus, I give You my skills, my intellect and my faith – however insignificant they may seem. Help me show Your love to the people I meet today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in a verse that meant a great deal to Pandita Ramabai:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 (NIVUK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

April 06 2022 (click for audio)

Two Men Called Jesus

Today is Wednesday the 6th of April, and this week we are praying through the events that led to Jesus' execution.

Each day we will pray (**P.R.A.Y.**) – '**P**': **PAUSING** to be still. '**R**': **REJOICING** with a Psalm and **REFLECTING** on the Gospel of Matthew. '**A**': **ASKING** God to help us and others and '**Y**': **YIELDING** to His will in our lives, no matter what.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem,
exalted above all the nations.
Let them praise your great and awesome name.
Your name is holy!
Mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established fairness.
Psalm 99:2-4a (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus is on trial. Despite being falsely accused, He has refused to defend Himself and now He's at the center of a political game...

*Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, 'Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.
Matthew 27:15-18 (NIV UK)*

Two very different men with the same name stand before Jerusalem. The first, Jesus Barabbas, violently protested Roman occupation (Mark 15:7). The second, Jesus of Nazareth, refused to take up arms, even to defend Himself (Luke 22:50-51). Barabbas and his friends were willing to kill to see Israel liberated, but Jesus was willing to die to see the world set free.

Ask

How do I approach conflict? If I'm honest, am I more like Barabbas, aggressively confronting those I oppose, or like Jesus, seeking peace and justice through selfless love?

Pause and pray

I think of a nation that is caught in conflict right now...

God, I ask You to raise up peacemakers that can work together to find a swift and just Peace.

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 it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, 'Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

Matthew 27:15-18 (NIV UK)

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

I am struck by the word 'self-interest'. It was the Jewish leaders that handed Jesus over to Pilate in order to silence the man who challenged their authority. They would rather see Jesus dead than have him undermine their power.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I often act in my own self-interest. I want power because it makes me feel safe. Today I choose Your way. Teach me to hold power lightly and to act in the interest of others.

Yielding Promise

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

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.
Matthew 10:38-39 (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.

April 07 2022 (click for audio)

People Power

Today is Thursday the 7th of April, and this week we continue our series on The Passion, praying through Matthew's account of Jesus' journey to the cross.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.*

*This is the Lord's doing,
and it is wonderful to see.*

This is the day the LORD has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:22-24 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on Jesus' trial before the Roman governor, Pilate...

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.' But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?' asked the governor.

'Barabbas,' they answered.

Matthew 27:19-21 (NIV UK)

How differently would Pilate's part in this story have played out if he had listened to his wife? If Pilate had heeded her dream, he could have used his power to prevent an injustice. But instead, he ignored her warning and delegated responsibility, allowing an easily manipulated crowd to decide a man's fate.

Ask

I wonder whether Pilate's wife's dream was from God.

God, I know You can speak through dreams. Remind me of the dreams You have given me in the past. I invite You to speak through my subconscious tonight.

Pause and pray

I pray for those working within the legal system who, like Pilate, have the power to decide a person's fate. God, I think of the court nearest to me and I ask You to increase the wisdom, compassion and courage of the judges who preside 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...

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.' But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?' asked the governor.

'Barabbas,' they answered.

Matthew 27:19-21 (NIV UK)

It's easy to judge Pilate for His inaction but I can sometimes remain passive when I have the power to prevent injustice. How can I use my power to act for justice – in the culture of my workplace, in the lives of people worse-off in my community, or in another area of my life?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, my judgment is flawed. I, like Pilate, can be swayed by the opinions of the crowd. Give me courage to make unpopular decisions when it's the right thing to do.

Yielding Promise

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

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:24 (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.

April 08 2022 (click for audio)

The Crowd's Verdict

Today is Friday the 8th of April, and this is the last day this week that we are exploring Jesus' journey to the cross, as it's captured in the Gospel of Matthew.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*O God, insolent people rise up against me;
a violent gang is trying to kill me.
You mean nothing to them.
But you, O Lord,
are a God of compassion and mercy,
slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
Psalm 86:14-15 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

The Jewish leaders have falsely accused Jesus of treason. Pilate, the Roman governor, lacks the courage to declare Him innocent. Now Jesus stands before the people of Jerusalem to receive His sentence...

*'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' Pilate asked.
They all answered, 'Crucify him!'
'Why? What crime has he committed?' asked Pilate.
But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'
When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said.
'It is your responsibility!'*

All the people answered, 'His blood is on us and on our children!'

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Matthew 27:22-26 (NIV UK)

Who was responsible for Jesus' death? Was it the Jewish leaders who manipulated the truth, the legal system and the masses? Was it Pilate, the governor who chose peace and popularity over protecting an innocent life? Or was it the crowd who, caught up in the moment, cried out for crucifixion? Maybe it was all of the above, and maybe it was me as well. *

*For a better exploration of these ideas, see Tom Wright, *Lent for Everyone*, Matthew, year A, SPCK 2011, p. 134 and Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew*, InterVarsity Press 2020, p. 299-302.

Ask

Jesus, You died in Barabbas' place, and You died in mine too. You accepted death so that the consequence of my sin could die with You. It seems insufficient but I start today with 'thank you'.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for people on death row around the world today. May they encounter Jesus, the Saviour who was sentenced to death. Help them receive Your forgiveness and mercy 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.

'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' Pilate asked.

They all answered, 'Crucify him!'

'Why? What crime has he committed?' asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said.

'It is your responsibility!'

All the people answered, 'His blood is on us and on our children!'

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Matthew 27:22-26 NIV UK

When Jesus entered Jerusalem just days before, the crowd shouted, 'Hosanna... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' (Matt. 21:9) How must Jesus have felt as He stood, just days later, before the same community now crying, 'Crucify'?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I can be as fickle as the crowds of Jerusalem, but today I commit myself to faithfully prioritizing You. Teach me to follow in Your footsteps, extending mercy to everyone I meet.

Yielding Promise

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

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

John 3:16 (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

April 09 2022 (click for audio)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Hero of Justice

Today is Saturday the 9th of April, feast of the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died on this day in 1945. On Feast Days we pause from praying the Bible to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore, we are thanking God for the example of Bonhoeffer, a dedicated 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 choose to rejoice in God's justice today, 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.
Psalm 9:7-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor, theologian, and anti-Nazi dissident living in Germany at the time of the Second World War. As Hitler rose to power in Europe, Bonhoeffer loudly and defiantly spoke out against him. As a result Bonhoeffer was forbidden to teach publicly and was forced underground. He taught seminary students for several years until his arrest and imprisonment in 1943. Incredibly, Bonhoeffer continued to teach from prison until he was moved to Flossenbürg Concentration camp.

While in Flossenbürg, Bonhoeffer was condemned to death, without witnesses, records of the proceedings or a defense. At 39 years old, he was executed, just one month before the war ended. Some of his parting words were: 'This is the end—for me the beginning of life.'*

* Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography, p.927.

Bonhoeffer's legacy lives on through his writing and through the powerful witness of his defiant stance against the injustice of his day.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote:

'When a madman is tearing through the streets in a car, I can, as a pastor who happens to be on the scene, do more than merely console or bury those who have been run over. I must jump in front of the car and stop it.'**

** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as cited by Hannah Ward, Hannah and Jennifer Wild, The Lion Christian Quotation Collection (BCA: London, 1997) p.204.

The challenge issued here by Bonhoeffer is a profound one: not only for every pastor, but for every Christian disciple.

Ask

I think about the chains of injustice that exist in my world today. What issues of exploitation or oppression am I silent about?

God, You challenge me not only to care but to act. Show me now how I might partner with You in establishing justice and freedom today.

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, bring to mind a group of people trapped in a cycle of injustice. Lead me in prayer for God's intervention. Establish Your justice and freedom.

Pause and pray

Yield

As well as his witness and teaching on justice, Bonhoeffer also taught powerfully on the cost of discipleship. Urging Christians not to settle for 'cheap grace', he wrote that:

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.***

*** Ibid p.204

I wonder what my faith in Jesus might cost me today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God of justice and grace, I submit once again to the all-consuming call of Your gospel: to give all that I have in order to gain the true treasure found in You, and only 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 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.

April 10 2022 (click for audio)

Palm Sunday

Today is Sunday the 10th of April, known around the world as Palm Sunday. On this day of rest and remembrance we leave our usual P.R.A.Y. rhythms behind and pray in a simpler way.

Today, Christians all over the world are celebrating Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the start of Holy Week. So I start this time of prayer by pausing to welcome Jesus by His Spirit into my life
Afresh

Pause and pray

I pause and reflect on the arrival of Jesus...

The next day the huge crowd that had arrived for the Feast heard that Jesus was entering Jerusalem. They broke off palm branches and went out to meet him. And they cheered:

Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in God's name!

Yes! The King of Israel!

Jesus got a young donkey and rode it, just as the Scripture has it:

No fear, Daughter Zion:

*See how your king comes,
riding a donkey's colt.*

John 12:12-15 (MSG)

Roman emperors would ride their finest stallions into a conquered city. Some Presidents today travel in vast armored cavalcades. But the King of kings sits humbly, on a donkey, and prepares to die.

Lord, give me opportunities to practice humility, to serve, to listen, and to prefer others this Holy Week

Pause and pray

The crowds shouted 'Hosanna', a cry from Psalm 118 that translates as, 'Lord, save us!'

Father, as Your Church gathers around the world today, I join with crowds in Jerusalem and cry out 'Hosanna'! Lord, save us from being inwardly focused; propel us out to tell the story of Your love this Easter.

Jesus, I pray on behalf of my friends and family members who don't know You and I say 'Hosanna! Lord, save us' - make Yourself known to each of them this week.

Spirit, on this Palm Sunday, I lift the leaders of my nation to You and I pray 'Hosanna! Lord, save them'; draw them closer to Jesus. May their leadership be characterized by His wisdom and humility

Pause and pray

Apostle Paul describes the humility of Jesus in his letter to the church in Philippi.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Philippians 2:5-8 (MSG)

And so, I use the words of Thomas Merton as my prayer, today:

*Lord, give me humility in which alone is rest,
and deliver me from pride which is the heaviest of burdens.
Possess my whole heart and soul with the simplicity of love.
Occupy my whole life with the one thought and the one desire of love,
that I may love not for the sake of merit, not for the sake of perfection,
not for the sake of virtue, not for the sake of sanctity, but for You alone.
Amen.**

*Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, (2003) p.47.

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

April 11 2022 (click for audio)

Don't Look Away

Today is Monday the 11th of April. It is Passion week, and we are on the last leg of the journey with Jesus towards the cross.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22...

I will praise you in the great assembly.

I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

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

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

For royal power belongs to the Lord.

He rules all the nations.

Psalm 22:25, 27- 28 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus has just been condemned by Pilate and flogged. Now at the hands of the soldiers, His torment continues...

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers round him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:27-31 (NIV UK)

Reading Matthew's account of the Passion and writing reflections for Lectio this week is daunting and painful. I want to skim - skip over the surface of the scriptures - to fast forward to the less distressing passages. I want to avert my gaze, to look away.

Ask

Jesus, this week would You give me the courage and the fortitude I need to delve deeply into this week's scriptures? To stay with you here, in Your affliction? To bear witness to Your suffering love?

Pause and pray

God I pray for those in power who hold You in disdain, who mock and assault You and oppress those who carry Your name. Hasten the day where every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2: 11) (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine myself in the scene. The smell of blood and sweat in the air. The cackle of cruel mockery, the restless energy of a mob mindless with hate and rage...

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers round him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. Matthew 27:27-31 (NIV UK)

They are like grown-up schoolboy bullies, drunk with power. It's tempting to separate myself from them, but if I'm honest, have there ever been times when I have held Jesus or His people in disdain? Where derision has been in my heart or on my lips? When my actions or attitudes have made a mockery of His Lordship?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I repent for the times I have not acknowledged Your Lordship, Your rightful rulership and authority in my life. Today I declare You as Lord and King, not only of the Jews, but of all the peoples of the earth, especially 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 Matthew 23:

For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Matthew 23:12 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

April 12 2002 (click for audio)

Self-Giving Love

Today is Tuesday the 12th of April. This week we are joining Jesus in His crucifixion and resurrection, as recounted in the Gospel of Matthew.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22...

*Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.
They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.
Psalm 22:3-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Flogged and mocked, Jesus has been led away to be crucified...

*As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
Matthew 27:32-37 (NIV UK)*

Theologian N.T. Wright frames the crucifixion this way:

'This is how he is shining the light of God's love into the dark corners of the world; by taking the evil of the world, the gratuitous violence, bullying and torture that still defaces the world, and letting it do its

worst to him. Never let it be said that the Christian faith is an airy-fairy thing...’*

* N.T. Wright. Matthew for Everyone, Part 2p.182

Ask

In the quiet, I reflect on the ways Jesus has shone the light of God into the dark corners of my world.

Pause and pray

Jesus I thank You that You don't shrink back from my sin and my suffering, but plunge headlong into it, joining me there, carrying me there, healing and restoring me there. I receive Your mercy and Your saving love today.

Pause and pray

Jesus today I pray for those who suffer at the hands of others. Victims of war. Those trapped in cycles of domestic abuse, violence and exploitation. Jesus, would You deliver, heal and restore them.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
Matthew 27:32-37 (NIV UK)*

Wright goes on to say:

‘What for Pilate and the soldiers was Jesus “crime” - his claim to be Israel’s true king – was for Matthew the sober truth. And the crucifixion was the means by which his kingdom would be established... If it was to be God’s kingdom, it would come about by God’s means; and the means that the true God chooses to use are the means of self-giving love.’**

**Ibid.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus I yield myself to Your self-giving love today. I don't deserve it. I haven't earned it. But I receive it with open hearted gratitude and give You thanks.

Yielding Promise

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

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

Exodus 33:19 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,

being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost,

proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

April 13 2002 (click for audio)

Spectator Sport

Today is Wednesday the 13th of April, and this week we are with Jesus on Golgotha, bearing witness to his death as written in the Gospel of Matthew.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to reflect on God's mercy today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 78...

*Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins
and did not destroy them all.
Many times he held back his anger
and did not unleash his fury!
For he remembered that they were merely mortal,
gone like a breath of wind that never returns.
Psalm 78:38-39 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus has been taken to Golgotha, stripped and crucified. But He is not alone...

*Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!' In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, "I am the Son of God."' In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.
Matthew 27:38-44 (NIV UK)*

It's shocking – death as a spectator sport? Sadly, through the ages it always has been. In the face of what should be a heart-breaking tragedy, people gawk and mock. It's appalling how bold they are. Jesus is captive to their cowardice and cruelty.

Ask

Jesus, have I become hardened to the suffering around me? Have I grown accustomed to gratuitous violence? Do I kick people when they are down? Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Pause and pray

God I pray for those who are being bullied, whether online, at school or in the workplace. Father, would You provide strength to endure, advocates to intervene, and a way of escape. In the quiet I pray for someone I know who is suffering at the hands of Others.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine the scene. Jesus battered, bleeding, straining for breath under a hot Middle-Eastern sun. The air full of insults. I look over the crowd. Do I find myself there?

Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!' In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, "I am the Son of God."' In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Matthew 27:38-44 (NIV UK)

Have I ever accused Jesus of not being who He says He is? Do I really understand what He did for me that day?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

It should have been me, Jesus. But in Your mercy You intervened, You stepped between me and the consequences of my faults and my failures, and You opened Your arms wide. Today I yield to mercy, and I worship 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 55:

*Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,*

and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
Isaiah 55:7 (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.

April 14 2002 (click for audio)

Forsaken

Today is thursday the 14th of April and this week we are standing at the foot of the cross, bearing witness to Jesus' crucifixion.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22...

*Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.
They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.
Psalm 22:3-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus suffers physical abuse at the hands of the soldiers. He suffers emotional abuse from the taunts of the mockers. But the worst trauma is yet to come...

*From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?').
When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'
Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'
Matthew 27:45-49 (NIV UK)*

Forsaken. In that moment, held between earth and heaven by our sin and by His love, Jesus feels forsaken. Jesus, who lived in constant union with His Father, confidently stating, 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30) hangs on the cross, alone.

Ask

Have I ever felt alone, particularly in times of personal suffering?

Jesus, I give You my emptiness, my loneliness, my desolation. I lift my lament and I echo Your cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Pause and pray

God, I pray for the forsaken. For widows and widowers. For those who have lost children to sickness, accident or suicide. Those with broken relationships. In the quiet I pray specifically for someone who I know who feels Forsaken.

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.

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?').

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'

Matthew 27:45-49 (NIVUK)

It's interesting to notice the different kinds of people in this story: the 'trying to figure-it-out-ers', the helpers, and the dispassionate observers. When it relates to other people's suffering, which one am I?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You joined me in my suffering. Give me the courage to join others in theirs.

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 62:

No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord will take delight in you.

Isaiah 62:4 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

April 15 2022 (click for audio)

Cataclysm!

Today is Friday the 15th of April, and on this Good Friday, we witness the death of Jesus on the cross, as recounted in the Gospel of Matthew.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22...

All who seek the Lord will praise him.

Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

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

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

For royal power belongs to the Lord.

He rules all the nations.

Psalm 22:26b-28 (NLT)

Pause and pray

It's the end. Or maybe, it's the beginning...

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Matthew 27:50-56 (NIV UK)

Jesus' death is a cataclysmic moment. Curtains tear, the earth shakes and tombs break. In the gospel of Luke it said that darkness came across the whole land (Luke 23:44). The whole world is falling apart! Or perhaps, it's being put back together.

Ask

God I give You the times in my life that have felt like cataclysmic moments, when everything is dark and it felt like my world was falling apart. Would You show me where you were, or are, in the midst of it all, making all things new?

Pause and pray

God I pray now for someone I know who is in the midst of crisis, in darkness, who feels like their world is falling apart. I pray the words of the psalmist in Psalm 143:8 'Let the morning bring [them] word of your unfailing love, as [they] put [their] trust in 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.

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Matthew 27:50-56 (NIV UK)

Remember the soldiers who tormented Jesus before His death? The mutilators, the mockers, the murderers? Here I see them again in the story, this time as true believers. Just proof that anyone, absolutely anyone, can repent and be restored.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus today I yield to hope. Hope that when all is falling apart, You are somehow at work putting things back together. Hope no one is too far gone to receive a change of heart and perspective. God of all hope, fill me with joy and peace as I put my trust in You, that I might overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13)

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 21:

'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.

April 16 2022 (click for audio)

The Watching Women

Today is Saturday the 16th of April: Holy Saturday.

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, You are the way, the truth and the life. Through this season of Lent, as I reflect on Your holy Passion, may my love be rekindled, that I might live sacrificially and wholly for You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to hope in God's redemption today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 130:

*I am counting on the Lord;
yes, I am counting on him.
I have put my hope in his word.
I long for the Lord
more than sentries long for the dawn,
yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.
O Israel, hope in the Lord;
for with the Lord there is unfailing love.
His redemption overflows.
He himself will redeem Israel
from every kind of sin.
Psalm 130:5-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus has died. The world has gone dark. And now there is nothing left to do but to bury Him...

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Matthew 27:57-61 (NIV UK)

Joseph is normally the main character in this part of the story, but in this instance I can't take my eyes off the watching women.

In yesterday's passage, they watched from a distance as Jesus struggled through His last moments. They were bearing witness. Holding space. I can't imagine how excruciating it must have been, particularly for Jesus' mother. Now they have followed the body and again are sitting and watching. And waiting.

Ask

Is there some circumstance in my life where there is nothing left to do but watch and wait? In the quiet, I take some time to talk to God about it.

God, here I am. Sitting. Watching. Waiting.

Pause and pray

God, would You draw near to the broken hearted, comfort those who mourn and provide for those who grieve. I think of someone I know now. Would You console the inconsolable, those who sit and watch and wait.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Matthew 27:57-61 (NIV UK)

I wonder what the women were thinking. Were they tormented by flashbacks of the terror and brutality of the last few days? Were they remembering with both sadness and gladness precious moments they had shared with Jesus? Or were they waiting to see if He would do as he said, and rise from the dead?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Today I join the prayer of songwriter Jason Upton, choosing to wait with expectation and with hope...

I will wait for You Jesus
You're the Sun on my horizon

All my hope's in You Jesus

And I can see You now arising*

*I Will Wait by Jason Upton, 2001 Key of David Music

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me reminds me in Psalm 27:

I remain confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the Lord

in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord;

be strong and take heart

and wait for the Lord.

Psalm 27:13-14 (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.

April 17 2022 (click for audio)

Come And See

Today is Sunday the 17th of April, and it's Resurrection Sunday! Christ IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! This is a very special Sabbath, so today we will be praying in a slightly different way.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Lord, I come to You today of all days with fresh hope. Speak to me now as I spend this time with You and let the reality of Your resurrection dispel despair and reawaken the love song of my life in you.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 22.

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

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

For royal power belongs to the Lord.

He rules all the nations.

Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.

Bow before him, all who are mortal,

all whose lives will end as dust.

Our children will also serve him.

Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.

They will hear about everything he has done.

Psalm 22:27-31 (NLT)

Pause and pray

It's the Sunday after Jesus' death, and today I join the women who have faithfully followed Him on His journey all the way to the cross and grave. Although this ancient story is so familiar, today I try to look at it with fresh eyes. I imagine myself as one of the women. As I approach the tomb, what do I see? Shadows taking form and color as the sun rises? Do I hear the birds waking the day? In light of recent events, how might I feel?

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to

the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Matthew 28:1-6 (NIV UK)

I expect the women thought it was going to be a quiet morning where they could grieve in peace. Instead, they experience another cataclysm.

Grief, loss, shock, fear and awe; all happening in the matter of a few heartbeats. And then that death defying declaration: 'He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see.'

Come and see.

Today I join those women and with American mission worker and hymn writer Fanny Crosby with this Easter Carol:

*Oh, the gladness and the glory
Of the tender Easter story,
Christ is risen! Christ is risen!
Do you hear the angels say?
All the bells triumphant ring it,
All the choirs celestial sing it,
And the gentle zephyrs wing it
Thro' the skies this sacred day.
Oh, the wondrous transformation,
Working out the world's salvation!
Christ, the crucified Redeemer,
Once consigned to darkest gloom,
Changing shadow into splendor,
With His love so sweet and tender,
Son of God, our true defender,
Rising deathless from the tomb.*

*Oh, the light of Easter morning,
All the earth and sky adorning!
Oh, how restful, how refreshing
Is its sacredness and love!
On my heart its peace is stealing,
Like a gentle balm of healing,
Christ, my risen Lord, revealing,
Throned in majesty above.**

*Easter Carol, Fanny Crosby. Music by Charles Langley

Pause and pray

Father God, thank You that you gave your only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He is risen! I am risen! Hallelujah!

Pause and pray

Jesus, You are the Living One; You were dead, and now look, You are alive for ever and ever! And behold, You are making all things new. You are risen! I am risen! Hallelujah!

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, thank You that You, the same spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives in me today, giving life to my mortal body. He is risen! I am risen! Hallelujah.

Pause and pray**Sabbath Blessing**

May this special sabbath day bring resurrection life to my heart and my home.

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

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

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness

in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

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

Amen

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

April 18 2022 (click for audio)

Enoch Sontonga: Hero of Creativity

Today is Monday the 18th day of April. Feast of the poet and composer Enoch Mankayi Sontonga who died on this day in 1905. On Feast Days we pause our usual rhythms 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 Enoch Sontonga, an almost accidental hero of Creativity.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's welcome today, joining gladly with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 87...

*I will count Egypt and Babylon among those who know me—
also Philistia and Tyre, and even distant Ethiopia.
They have all become citizens of Jerusalem!
Regarding Jerusalem it will be said,
'Everyone enjoys the rights of citizenship there.'
And the Most High will personally bless this city.
When the LORD registers the nations, he will say,
'They have all become citizens of Jerusalem.'
Psalm 87:4-6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Born in 1873, Enoch Sontonga was the choirmaster of a Methodist Mission School near Johannesburg in the Cape Colony, soon to become known as South Africa. In 1897, the 24-year-old teacher wrote a hymn in his native Xhosa language for the students to sing as a school anthem. Its first line was, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika – 'God Bless Africa'. As far as he knew, when he died suddenly in 1905, aged just 32, this was just one of many songs written by an unknown poet, and destined to be forgotten.

God bless Africa;

*May her strength rise high up;
Hear our prayers and bless us.
Descend, O Spirit,
Descend, O Holy Spirit.**

**Translated from the Xhosa. <https://www.antiwarsongs.org/canzone.php?id=996&lang=en>*

But the song was not forgotten. By 1925 it had been adopted as the anthem of the African National Congress, becoming a symbol of the anti-apartheid movement. With additional stanzas by the poet Samuel Mqhayi, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika became a pan-African liberation song and versions of it were adopted, at least for a time, as the national anthems of Zambia, Tanzania, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The first verse of Enoch Sontonga's Xhosa hymn remains embedded in South Africa's National Anthem today.**

**See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enoch_Sontonga and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nkosi_Sikelel%27_iAfrika

Ask

Do I underestimate what God might create out of the ordinary little things I do?

Lord, may I do or make something in my lifetime which will outlive me, and continue to impact coming generations.

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray today for someone I know – an artist, an author, a poet, a songwriter – that you would give longevity to their words. May they speak God's freedom long into the Future

Pause and pray

Yield

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika has become almost the anthem of a continent. Anthropologist David Coplan argues that it has 'come to symbolize more than any other piece of expressive culture the struggle for African unity and liberation.'***

*** <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/4631>

*God bless Africa;
May her strength rise high up;
Hear our prayers and bless us.
Descend, O Spirit,
Descend, O Holy Spirit.*

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, descend on me. I yield to Your transforming flame. Fill me afresh so that I may be a source of grace and blessing in my world today.

Yielding Promise

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

*The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26 (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.

April 19 2022 (click for audio)

Filled With Joy

Today is Tuesday the 19th of April. This week we're exploring the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the way it fills our hearts with joy.

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

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive, present and powerful today. Spirit, infuse all I say and do with the hope of resurrection life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.
My body rests in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.
You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.
Psalm 16:9-11 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today we pick up the Easter story at Jesus' empty tomb. Two women have encountered an angel who tells them, "He is not here; he has risen... Come and see the place where he lay."...

*'Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'
So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'
Matthew 28:7-10 (NIV UK)*

Imagine the startling moment when you are arrested by seeing the One you love raised from the dead. Jesus was not just a faraway or distant leader; to His followers He was the One who carried all their fears, hopes, longings, and laughter. At the cross, the disciples must have felt that their dreams were shattered and their hope had died with Jesus. And then, in a moment, the story changed and they encountered a living, risen Christ. No wonder we read in this passage that the women, hurrying from the tomb to tell their friends, were both 'afraid and yet filled with joy'.

Ask

Holy Spirit, I think of the places in my life where I have seen death, sorrow, and lost hope. I ask today that You would resurrect my joy, recapture my wonder, and reflect into my heart the same hope experienced by these early disciples. I receive joy in Your presence today.

Pause and pray

I think of the pain, sorrow, and death in our world. I hold in my heart a place of particular suffering and ask that You would allow the joy of Your kindness to radiate in places of darkness. May the bright joy of a God who is present in our suffering be known even in these situations.

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 go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Matthew 28:7-10 (NIV UK)

My joy is often robbed by fear. I see in this passage the tender intimacy of Jesus, who knows the hearts of His followers. He speaks to their unspoken wounds and fears and says simply: 'Do not be afraid. I am with you'.

In His presence, fear flees. When I adore Jesus, I find that my places of fear lose power over me.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father, I surrender to You my deepest fears. I take a moment to reflect on one area where fear has held power in my life. I ask that You would show me how to release my fears to You. I worship You today for all that You will yet do 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 Hebrews:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
Hebrews 2:14-15 (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.

April 20 2022 (click for audio)

Discerning truth

Today is Wednesday the 20th of April. This week we're exploring the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the way it invites us to discern truth.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive, present and powerful today. Spirit, infuse all I say and do with the hope of resurrection life.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's truth 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.
Unfailing love and truth have met together.
Righteousness and peace have kissed!
Psalm 85:8-10 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I'm continuing to reflect on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The guards, chief priests, and leaders are making every effort to hide the truth...

*While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep." If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.
Matthew 28:11-15 (NIV UK)*

In an era of fake news, conspiracy theories, social media firestorms, and trending topics, even our most core beliefs can become polarizing and pointed, weaponized by public debates. Passages like the

one I read today remind me that there is a need to discern truth and not allow my heart to be swayed by every rumor I hear. New York pastor, Jon Tyson says, 'If we are going to follow Jesus well, we need to reclaim the gift of discernment.'*

*<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1i4yTmfalB3rMMUTWsBQ65?si=qdNp6KBoSiutvcsDu8tIAQ>

Ask

Jesus, I pray that You would show me how to hear Your voice more clearly. I ask today that if any screen, news, or media is silencing Your voice in my life, You would show me how to redirect my time to listen to You.

Pause and pray

Father, I pray for our world, torn apart by conflict and distressing news. I pray for the places of sin and destruction that foster gossip, bitterness, and any place where truth is silenced. I pray that men and women of faith would rise up with a gentle but bold voice of truth in times of chaos.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep." If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Matthew 28:11-15 (NIV UK)

This whole passage plays out against the backdrop of the women of faith, carrying the message of resurrection life and hope, and while they are on their way to proclaim the truth, their message is contested by ungodly money, power, and corruption.

God carries me to life and hope. The enemy works to bring confusion and corruption. Truth may be contested, but the power of Jesus is greater than any other.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, I pray for any place in my heart that has been corrupted by an unhealthy love of money, power, or false stories. I ask that You would give me the clarity and authority to stand for truth, even where it feels contested.

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 8:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

John 8:31-32 (NIV UK)

Closing prayer

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

being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,

being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost,

proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

April 21 2022 (click for audio)

Resurrection Honesty

Today is Thursday the 21st of April. This week we're exploring the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive, present and powerful today. Spirit, infuse all I say and do with the hope of resurrection life.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's tenderness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 38...

*I am exhausted and completely crushed.
My groans come from an anguished heart.
You know what I long for, Lord;
you hear my every sigh.
My heart beats wildly, my strength fails,
and I am going blind.
Psalm 38:8-10 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the space that the resurrected Jesus gives me to be honest in His presence...

*Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
Matthew 28:16-17 (NIV UK)*

I spent many of my early years of faith seeking to be strong, to carry the load, to walk in honor. I experienced many griefs: unanswered prayers, tragic death, moral failures. One day, I had a simple realization: I did not need to be strong enough to carry every pain and answer every question. This is what Jesus has done for me. I find deep comfort in reading the story of these eleven disciples, who walked in obedience to the mountain where Jesus had directed them, but sat in His presence in a mix of worship and doubt. When I imagine this scene, I sense the tenderness of Christ towards His followers.

Ask

Father, I bring my whole self to You today. I make myself fully present to You, honest in my struggles and questions. I pray that You would show me how to turn my heart to worship, and to recognize that You are with me.

Pause and pray

I choose someone I know who is wrestling with doubt right now. I think of the way the disciples carried honest doubt in the presence of Christ. I pray that You would show them how to carry their questions into Your presence.

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 the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
Matthew 28:16-17 (NIV UK)*

My doubts are important to address, but my primary call, like the disciples, is to linger in the presence of Jesus. In the places where my heart burns with His love, I may not find immediate answers or resolution, but I often find my perspective radically shifted.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, shift my perspective from debate to desire, from loss to longing, from anger to anticipation of Your presence. I pray that the position of my heart would be primarily that of one who longs for Your love to be known 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 Isaiah 25:

*On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death for ever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.
The LORD has spoken.
Isaiah 25:7-8 (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.

April 22 2022 (click for audio)

Earth Day

It's Friday the 22nd of April, and as regular users of Lectio 365 will know, we occasionally take a break from our daily rhythm to reflect on the life of a hero of faith or to acknowledge a special event. Today is Earth Day, and so we are reflecting on the world that God has created, and the responsibility God has given us to steward it.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's awesome creativity today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 8...

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

Pause and pray

The first Earth Day took place on 22nd April 1970, and it is widely considered to be the birthday of the modern environmental movement. It is estimated that around one billion people worldwide will take part in this year's activities, which include all sorts of conservation and restoration projects.

The modern Earth Day is actually the convergence of two events, both founded in 1970, one by US Senator Gaylord Nelson, and the other – the first – by the lesser-known John McConnell.

John was born in 1915, grandson of T.W. McConnell, who participated in the famous Azusa Street Revival, in Los Angeles, where the worldwide Pentecostal movement was born. John's Christian

upbringing provided the foundations for his life, and it shaped his lifelong message of justice, peace and care of the Earth.

It was in 1939, aged 24, that John first became concerned about the environment. He'd been working in a laboratory that made plastics when he noticed just how much pollution the manufacturing process produced. His concern for ecology grew quickly, but public interest in environmental issues was rare at that time, and grew more slowly.

Eventually, in 1969, John got to speak at a UNESCO conference in San Francisco, where he first proposed a day of peace to honor the Earth. A few months later, in March 1970, the UN Secretary General, U. Thant, signed a proclamation to officially launch Earth Day. When this event merged with Senator Nelson's planned day of peace, which was scheduled to launch just one month later, a true movement was born.

The theme for Earth Day 2022 is 'Invest in our planet', and throughout this week millions of people around the world will join in. People will plant trees, clean up the rubbish in their communities, and participate in recycling and conservation programs. People will sign petitions and send them to their local government representatives, calling for action to stop global warming and to reverse environmental destruction, and for the creation of greener businesses and schools. In hundreds, perhaps millions, of small ways, people will help to restore the earth.*

*To find out more, visit www.earthday.org

And all this, according to Genesis 1, is a God-given task. 'Let us make human beings in our image ... reflecting our nature,' says God. 'They can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle. And, yes, Earth itself...' (Genesis 1:26 MSG).

Ask

God, help me to look with love on all that You have created, and to take seriously the responsibility that You have given me over the Earth. What can I do today to play a part in helping to restore the Earth?

Pause and pray

Creator God, I ask You to give politicians and leaders of industries divine wisdom today - revelation, even - to see what can be done to restore the Earth, and give them the courage to get it done.

Pause and pray

Yield

In the introduction to Ruth Valerio's book, *Saying Yes To Life*, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, wrote:

Every single one of us has a responsibility as part of our discipleship to Jesus Christ to live a life that cares for God's world and its creatures. As Psalm 24 reads, 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.' **

**Justin Welby, in Ruth Valerio, *Saying Yes to Life*, 2020 p.ix.

When the award-winning author, Marilynne Robinson, was asked by an interviewer, 'What single thing do you believe would make the world in general a better place?' she replied very simply, 'Loving it more.' ***

***<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jul/06/marilynne-robinson-interview-barack-obama-donald-trump-writer-theologian>

My responsibility is simple - to love the world and everything in it.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, You gave Your only Son, Jesus, because You loved the world. And through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the world - everything on Earth and in the heavens - is being reconciled, restored, made whole.

I surrender, once again, to Your great love for me, and I ask that Your love would flow through me. Help me to love the world, and to take seriously the task of reconciliation and restoration that you have given to me. (John 3:16, Colossians 1:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:18)

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 145 that:

[He] is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

Psalm 145:9 (NLT)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

April 23 2022 (click for audio)

An Invitation of Hope

Today is Saturday the 23rd of April. This week we're exploring the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the way it invites us to carry a message of hope and God's presence to our world.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive, present and powerful today. Spirit, infuse all I say and do with the hope of resurrection life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Praise the LORD, you angels,
you mighty ones who carry out his plans,
listening for each of his commands.
Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels
who serve him and do his will!
Praise the LORD, everything he has created,
everything in all his kingdom.
Let all that I am praise the LORD.
Psalm 103:20-22 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the way that God invites us to participate in His mission...

*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'
Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV UK)*

I have sometimes lost sight of the joy of sharing my faith. It has become a duty rather than a delight. I recently heard the story of Jesus described as a piece of music. Stephen Cottrell says it this way:

Was it not the beautiful music of the gospel that first drew you to Christ?...

And where are you listening to the music today? How will you carry on listening to it tomorrow, so as to sustain yourself in all the tomorrows that lie ahead? What new rhythms and harmonies do you hear? And what variations will you play? How will you invite others to be part of it?*

* Stephen Cottrell, *On Priesthood: Servants, Shepherds, Messengers, Sentinels and Stewards*(London: SPCK, 2020) p. 124.

Ask

Jesus, I ask You to remind me of the beautiful melody of Your gospel. Remind me of the joy of my salvation, the hope of baptism, the truth of teaching, and the eternal presence of Your Spirit with me. Captivate my heart again with longing for Your presence in my life.

Pause and pray

I think today of my friends who have not yet encountered Your love. I pray that you would show me how to share the power of Your resurrected life and love with them today. I ask for a fresh anointing of Your Holy Spirit to know what language, music, imagery, or story might capture their hearts for the beauty of the Gospel.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'
Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV UK)

I used to think of this passage like a list of short commands, a bullet point 'to do' list for winning friends to faith. Over the past few years, as I have walked with friends towards Jesus, I have recognized the gentle but intentional invitation of these verses: to go with our heart open to the world, to give the invitation to be baptized into the family of God, and to walk in faithfulness to the teachings of Scripture. As I live this way, I find the presence of Jesus with me.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, I pray that You would flood my heart with the light of Your presence. I pray that my daily choice would be to carry Your light, hope, and wonder to the world around me. Light a fire in my heart, Spirit of the living God.

Yielding Promise

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

This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.

1 John 5:2-4a (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.

April 24 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Easter Week

Today is Sunday the 24th of April, and this week we've been reflecting on encounters with the resurrected Jesus. Now we put our Monday to Saturday rhythms aside and pray in a simpler way for the Sabbath.

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

*Eugene Peterson, Tell It Slant, p.82

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

Pause and pray

A prayer of contentment from Psalm 131:

*My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quietened myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and for evermore.
Psalm 131:1-3 (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 online or in person in so many countries. Revive and sanctify us, we 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.

AMEN!

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

[April 25 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Jesus Draws Near

It's Monday the 25th of April and today we are beginning a new series on Lectio 365. Over the next three weeks we will be exploring how we hear God's voice and drawing wisdom from Pete Greig's book, *How To Hear God*. Today, we are focusing on how we hear God through Jesus Himself.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;

he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

The righteous person faces many troubles,

but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.

Psalm 34:17-19 (NLT)

Pause and pray

In the final chapter of Luke's gospel, he tells of a series of remarkable encounters that people had with Jesus following His resurrection. Today, I am reflecting on one of these encounters, which took place on the road to Emmaus.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

Luke 24:13-16 (NIV UK)

If I desire to hear God, the first thing that I need to realize is that it begins and ends with hearing Jesus.

‘Jesus is what God sounds like,’ writes Pete Greig. ‘He’s literally the “living Word of God”. Hearing his voice is not so much a skill [I] must master, therefore, as a master [I] must meet. All the other ways that God communicates – through the Bible, prophecy, dreams, visions and so on - come through Jesus and point back to him too.’*

* Pete Greig, *How To Hear God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022), p. xv.

Ask

Like the two followers of Jesus, there’s a lot going on in my life at the moment, and I feel a bit overwhelmed by ‘everything that has happened’.

Lord Jesus, as I name the things that I’m finding overwhelming before You now, I take comfort, knowing that I’m not alone – You are walking with me. I listen closely for Your voice today.

Pause and pray

Who amongst my circles of friends seems overwhelmed by ‘everything that has happened’? Maybe it’s their financial circumstances, or sickness in their family? Or maybe it’s the news from around the world?

Lord Jesus, I ask You to come and walk with them today, just like You did with those two friends on the road to Emmaus

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 that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

Luke 24:13-16 (NIV UK)

Over the next three weeks, I’m going to return to this extraordinary story on a few occasions. I’m going to reflect on it and wait within it, listening for new ways to hear God in my own life. ‘Learn to live inside this story,’ says theologian Tom Wright, ‘and you will find it inexhaustible.’**

** Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2001), p. 293.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I surrender to You, as best I can. I’m excited to be walking with You, listening to You and learning from You. I open my ears to hear You and my heart to receive 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 Matthew 28:

'I'll be with you... day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.'

Matthew 28:20b (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

To find out more about the book go to <https://www.24-7prayer.com/how-to-hear-god/>

[April 26 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Through The Son

It's Tuesday the 26th of April, and we are continuing to explore how we listen for God's voice in our lives, drawing wisdom from Pete Greig's book, *How To Hear God*. Together we will pray **(P.R.A.Y.)** very simply each day – **'P': PAUSING** to be still. **'R': REJOICING** with a Psalm and **REFLECTING** on a Scripture. **'A': ASKING** God to help us and others and **'Y': YIELDING** to His will in our lives, come what may.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice that God speaks today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 50...

*The LORD, the Mighty One, is God,
and he has spoken;
he has summoned all humanity
from where the sun rises to where it sets.
From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines in glorious radiance.
Our God approaches,
and he is not silent.
Psalm 50:1-3a (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the opening verses from the book of Hebrews...

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.
Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV UK)*

'What this means is that hearing God begins and ends with meeting Jesus. We understand the Bible in the light of Christ, and not the other way round. Every other way in which God communicates – and in which [I] may therefore hear him speak - comes through Jesus and points back to him too. Nothing

can replace, and nothing matters more, than a personal encounter with Jesus.’*

* Pete Greig, *How To Hear God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022), p. 13.

Ask

In the quiet, I ask myself... Do I simply go to meetings about Jesus, or do I actually meet with Him?
When was the last time I encountered Jesus personally?

Lord Jesus, there's no time like the present. Please meet me here now.

Pause and pray

I think of three friends who haven't yet encountered Jesus for themselves. Maybe they've been to meetings about Him, but haven't yet met Him.

Lord Jesus, I name these friends before You now, one by one. I ask You to come and walk with them, just like You did with those friends on the road to Emmaus. Show them who You are.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV UK)

The author, C.S. Lewis puts it like this: *'It is Christ himself, not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to him.'***

** C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Vol. 3: Narnia, Cambridge & Joy, 1950-1963, edited by Walter Hooper (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), p. 246.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Using words from the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, I pray:

Lord Jesus, You are the author of my faith – You are the one writing my story, and I surrender every page of my life to You. You are also the perfecter of my faith – You are the one who forgives my sin and makes me whole. I fix my eyes on You, Jesus. (Hebrews 12:2)

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:

'Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in...'
Revelation 3:20a (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.

To find out more about the book go to <https://www.24-7prayer.com/how-to-hear-god/>

April 27 2022 (click for audio)

Jesus' Bible Study

It's Wednesday the 27th of April, and we are continuing to explore how we listen for the voice of God, drawing wisdom from Pete Greig's book, *How To Hear God*. Today, we are focusing on how we hear God through the Bible.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the power of God's voice today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 33...

*The LORD merely spoke,
and the heavens were created.
He breathed the word,
and all the stars were born.
He assigned the sea its boundaries
and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs.
Let the whole world fear the Lord,
and let everyone stand in awe of him.
For when he spoke, the world began!
It appeared at his command.
Psalm 33:6-9 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am returning to the Emmaus road story. Jesus' two followers didn't recognize that it was Him as they explained what had been happening in Jerusalem. 'We had hoped he was the Messiah,' they said sadly. (Luke 24:21, NLT)

*He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.
Luke 24:25-27 (NIV UK)*

'When it comes to hearing God, the Bible is the language of his heart. Nothing he says in any other way in any other context will ever override, undermine or contradict what he has said in the Scriptures. That's why Jesus doesn't just show up on the road to Emmaus and say, 'Hi, it's me!' Instead, he takes considerable time to deliver a lengthy biblical exposition in which he reinterprets God's Word radically, in the light of his own life, death and resurrection.'*

* Pete Greig, *How To Hear God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022), p. 36.

Ask

Father God, as I make time to read the Bible – Your word – this week, I ask You to speak to me through it.

When was the last time that I heard God speak specifically to me through the Bible? What did God say?

Pause and pray

I think of the people and the places that I am carrying in my heart at the moment, and I hold them before the Lord for a few moments.

Loving God, please give me a verse, a word from Your word, that I can hold onto and pray for these people this week. Speak to me, so that I can intercede.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I try to imagine myself as one of the two followers on the road to Emmaus, listening with astonishment as Jesus explains all the Scriptures about himself.

He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:25-27 (NIV UK)

I wonder how the two friends felt as Jesus came to the end of His unique and extraordinary Bible study? Luke records what they said to each other: ‘Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us...?’ (Luke 24:32, NLT)

When was the last time my heart burned within me as I read the Bible?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Father God, the uncomfortable truth is that sometimes I find the Bible boring... confusing... disappointing even. As I surrender these feelings to You, I ask You to awaken me to the wonders in Your Word. Open my eyes to see it in new ways, and I ask You to make my heart burn within me. ***

*** Adapted from Pete Greig, How To Hear God (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022), p. 46.*

Yielding Promise

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

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.
Isaiah 40:8 (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.

To find out more about the book go to <https://www.24-7prayer.com/how-to-hear-god/>

April 28 2022 (click for audio)

God's GPS

It's Thursday the 28th of April, and we are continuing to explore how we hear God's voice, drawing wisdom from Pete Greig's book, *How To Hear God*. Today, we are again focusing on how we hear God through the Bible.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's care and protection 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.
If only you would listen to his voice today!
Psalm 95:6-7 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a verse from the book of Isaiah. Having rebuked the people of Judah for trusting in Egypt for help instead of in God, the prophet Isaiah then says that God will restore and guide them.

*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)*

'The Bible is a constant source of guidance, wisdom and direction through life's many twists and turns.' It can seem a bit formal at first, but the more I engage my head and my heart with what I'm reading, the more familiar and familial it becomes. A bit like a GPS, it guides me along the pathways of my life, and it always gets me home.*

* Quoted and adapted from Pete Greig, *How To Hear God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022), p. 39.

Ask

In what areas of my life do I need God's guidance right now?

I close my eyes and wait for a moment.

Is there a word or a verse from the Bible that God might want to use to show me the right way to go?

Pause and pray

In today's verse, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to the people – the nation – of Judah. Which nation is particularly on my mind and in my heart right now?

Almighty God, as I name this nation before You, I ask You to speak to them – guide them in the way they should go. Raise up prophetic voices who will speak Your word and influence the leaders of this nation for good.

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.

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)

The reason why God promised to restore and guide the people of Judah is the same reason He restores and guides me – because of His great love.

Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the papal household, puts it like this: 'If the written word of the Bible could be changed into a spoken word and become a single voice, this voice, more powerful than the roaring of the sea would cry out: "the Father loves you!" (John 16:27). Everything that God does and says in the Bible is love, even God's anger is nothing but love. God "is" love!'

** Raniero Cantalamessa, Life in Christ, p. 7.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, I surrender to Your restoration and Your guidance, knowing that You love me and want the very best for me. I will continue to listen out for Your voice – show me the way I should go.

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:

When the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is.

John 16:13 (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

To find out more about the book go to <https://www.24-7prayer.com/how-to-hear-god/>

April 29 2022 (click for audio)

Praying The bible

It's Friday the 29th of April, and we are continuing to explore how we listen to God, drawing wisdom from Pete Greig's book, How to Hear God.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water.
I have seen you in your sanctuary
and gazed upon your power and glory.
Psalm 63:1-2 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am returning, once again, to the two friends who were traveling to Emmaus. Jesus had been explaining the Scriptures to them as they walked along the road together (although they didn't realize that it was Jesus), and so they asked him to stay and eat with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'
Luke 24:30-32 (NIV UK)

Jesus didn't simply explain the Scriptures in an objective, analytical way. He applied the Scriptures, both to himself and to the recent experiences of these two friends. Jesus didn't just fill their heads with information – He filled their hearts with inspiration.

Lectio 365 is inspired by Lectio Divina, a way of meditating on the Bible that's been used by Christians for centuries to do this same thing – to fill our hearts with inspiration, to enable us to pray the Scriptures and hear God's voice through them.

Ask

Is my approach to the Bible more head than heart, or more heart than head? Both are important, but right now I'm opening my heart to be inspired...

Lord Jesus, explain the Scriptures to me, just like those two friends on the way to Emmaus. When I read Your Word, give me eyes to see and ears to hear what You're saying to me.

Pause and pray

I think about my friends, particularly those who don't yet know Jesus.

Lord Jesus, I long for them to know what those two friends experienced as they sat and ate with You at the end of their journey on the road to Emmaus. Open their eyes so that they recognize 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.

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

Luke 24:30-32 (NIV UK)

'Prayer was never meant to be a monologue,' writes Mark Batterson. 'It was meant to be a dialogue. Think of Scripture as God's part of the script; prayer is our part. Scripture is God's way of initiating a conversation; prayer is our response. The paradigm shift happens when you realize that the Bible wasn't meant to be read through; the Bible was meant to be prayed through. And if you pray through it, you will never run out of things to talk about.'*

* Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), p. 94

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, I admit that I've often held Your words in my head because I'm afraid of what they will mean for me if I let them enter my heart. Forgive me. I yield to You, and to Your word, today – speak to me, make my heart burn.

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 that:

His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying [me] open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one can resist God's Word.

Hebrews 4:12b-13a (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

To find out more about the book go to <https://www.24-7prayer.com/how-to-hear-god/>

April 30 2022 (click for audio)

Yielding To God

It's Saturday the 30th of April, and we are continuing to explore themes from Pete Greig's book, *How To Hear God*

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Loving God, as I become aware of Your presence, open my ears to hear You and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to trust in God's love and guidance today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 25...

*O Lord, I give my life to you.
I trust in you, my God...
Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.
Psalm 25:1-2a, 4-5 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a few verses from Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the whole Bible.

*I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.
Be good to your servant while I live,
that I may obey your word.
Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.
Psalm 119:15-18 (NIV UK)*

Almost every verse of Psalm 119 mentions God's word in some way. The writers use words like 'joy', 'delight', 'cling' and 'pursue' to describe their love for God's word. 'Oh, how I love your instructions,' they say, 'I think about them all day long.' (Psalm 119:97, NLT)

Ask

I use today's reading as my simple prayer...

Father God, open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your word, Your great love letter to me.

Pause and pray

According to Wycliffe Bible translators, of the 7,378 languages spoken around the world, only 717 of them have a full Bible. Millions of people still don't have a single verse of the Bible in their language.*
<https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/about/our-impact/>

Father God, I pray for those who are working hard around the world to make the Bible available in new languages. May Your word be Heard.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.
Be good to your servant while I live,
that I may obey your word.
Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.
Psalm 119:15-18 (NIV UK)*

At the end of every Lectio 365 devotional, I am invited to 'yield', to submit and surrender to God and how He has spoken to me. It's where I 'let go and let God'. It's where I echo Jesus' prayer from the Garden of Gethsemane, 'Yet not my will but Yours be done.' (Luke 22:42) And the Lectio for Families app uses an even simpler word for this final section... 'YES'.**

** <https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectioforfamilies/>

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, yes. To all the things You've been saying to me this week, I say yes. Not my will, but Yours be done.

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:

*Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him... Fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.
Romans 12:1-2a (MSG)*

Closing Prayer

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

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