

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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July 2022

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

Month of July 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.

July 01 2022 (click for audio)

Hospitality Is Risky

Today is Friday the 1st of July, and this week we are exploring the story of Mary and Martha whose lives were shaped by the practice of hospitality.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of welcome, You invite me into Your family. I sit at Your table and savor Your word to me. Help me receive all the nourishment You have for me today.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*I will be glad and rejoice in your unfailing love,
for you have seen my troubles,
and you care about the anguish of my soul.
You have not handed me over to my enemies
but have set me in a safe place.*

Psalm 31:7-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, we're reflecting on Jesus' visit with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Mary had just poured some incredibly expensive perfume on Jesus' feet, and Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, wasn't happy about it at all!

...one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

John 12:4-8 (NIV UK)

Hospitality is risky and subversive, and it raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions. Do I, like Judas, get upset about the cost of welcoming others? Do I make judgments about which people deserve to be welcomed and which people don't? Am I worried that my reputation will suffer if I welcome certain people? Am I afraid that I'll do something wrong and people will be offended?

Ask

I take a few moments now to consider these questions. What holds me back from practicing hospitality?

Pause and pray

In today's Bible reading, Jesus mentioned those who are poor. Millions of people around the world are desperately poor, and there are increasing numbers in my country too. With food and fuel prices rising quickly, many people are really struggling to pay their bills.

Father God, I ask You to look after those who are dependent on food banks to feed their families, those who are worried about how to fill their cars with petrol and heat their homes in Winter. Show me and my church community what we can do to meet some of these needs.

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.

...one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

John 12:4-8 (NIV UK)

Judas tried to disguise his complaint about the extravagant way that Mary welcomed Jesus, but the truth was that his love of money affected everything he did.

One of the biggest threats to me practicing hospitality like Mary and Martha is my attitude to money and to the things that I own. I take a few moments now to invite the Holy Spirit to search me and test me in this area (Psalm 139:23).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I yield my bank balance to You, and my attitude to my bank balance too. Help me to remember that whenever I offer hospitality to anyone, whenever I give anyone clothes or food or a warm welcome, I offer it to You too (Matthew 25:40-45).

Yielding Promise

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

...to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way [I] will lay up treasure... as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that [I] may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 (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.

July 02 2022 (click for audio)

Catherine & William Booth: Heroes of Justice and Hospitality

Today is Saturday the 2nd of July, the Feast of the pioneers Catherine and William Booth, who on this day in 1865, through preaching the gospel in London, England, began a work that would lead to the establishment of the Salvation Army.

On Feast Days like today, we celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies the six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: loving God through prayer and creativity, loving others through justice and hospitality, and loving the world through learning and mission.

Today, therefore, we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Catherine and William Booth, heroes of justice and hospitality.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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 the presence of Jesus today, appearing, as He so often does, in unexpected and even disturbing ways.

'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

Matthew 25:34-36 (NLT)

Pause and pray

William Booth grew up in Nottingham, England, in the mid-19th century. He found faith early and was an active Methodist, drawn to street preaching. As a teenager he apprenticed in a Pawnbroker's shop and was disturbed by the poverty he witnessed.

Catherine Mumford was raised a dedicated Christian with a commitment to personal holiness. An avid reader and thinker, Catherine was immediately impressed by the young preacher William Booth.

Married in 1855, Catherine and William were a force to be reckoned with. Together they dedicated their lives to bringing the transforming power of the gospel to the people who needed it most.

On this day, in 1865, outside The Blind Beggar pub in London, William Booth began preaching to crowds of people. This work would lead to many being saved and to the founding of the Christian Mission, later renamed The Salvation Army.

As Catherine and William shared the message of Jesus in a way ordinary people could understand and relate to, their work grew. Despite criticism and opposition from people who disagreed with their methods, the Booths welcomed everyone, especially people who felt rejected or unwelcome in more traditional churches.

Catherine Booth once said, 'To better the future we must disturb the present.'*

*Nealson Munn and David Collinson, *Insane: the Stories of Crazy Salvos Who Changed the World*, (Australia: Salvo Publishing, 2007), p. 2.

In the early years of The Salvation Army, William, Catherine and others caused many 'disturbances'...

In a time when women were often not permitted to teach, Catherine disturbed social and theological norms by preaching and seeing people saved alongside her husband.

Catherine and William disturbed the business world when they campaigned for safer working conditions for suffering workers in matchstick factories. They even provided better employment by launching their own brand of matches, 'Lights in Darkest England'.

The Booths disturbed the hidden sex industry of their day too. They worked with a journalist to expose how easy it was to traffic vulnerable young women and protested in parliament demanding change.

Catherine and William Booth noticed injustice, pain and struggle, in the lives of the people around them and they did something about it.

Ask

I am deeply challenged by Catherine's words, 'To better the future we must disturb the present.'* What does this mean for me today? What needs to be disturbed in my life to set God's direction for my future?

God, I ask You to show me.

Pause and pray

Where is there injustice, pain and struggle in my nation? Maybe even in my local community?

God, I ask You to disturb me. Help me not to walk on by or look the other way. Move my heart and inspire my mind – what role can I play in Your plans for the people affected by this issue?

Pause and pray

Yield

On 9th May 1912, William Booth spoke these stirring words in his final address to thousands of Salvationists:

*While women weep as they do now, I'll fight;
while little children go hungry as they do now, I'll fight;
while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight;
while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight – I'll fight to the very end!***

**Nealson Munn and David Collinson, *Insane: the Stories of Crazy Salvos Who Changed the World*, (Australia: Salvo Publishing, 2007), p 186.

Three months later, William Booth was 'promoted to glory'. Over a century after his death, William's words inspire Christians from many streams of the Church and capture the heart of The Salvation Army which continues to work in over a hundred nations today.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I want to dedicate my life to others, just like the Booths. I know that I am too attached to my own comfort and concerns, so disturb me, Lord. Open my eyes to the injustice, pain and struggle around me. Equip me to take the transforming power of the gospel to the people who need it most.

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 25:

*...whatever [I do] for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, [I do] for [Jesus].
Matthew 25:40 (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.

July 03 2022 (click for audio)

Sabbath Prayer, Hospitality

Today is Sunday the 3rd of July, and today we pause our regular rhythm to pray a special Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about the biblical priority of hospitality, and today I celebrate the greatest invitation of all time: Jesus said, 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me' (Revelation 3: 20

Pause and pray

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

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

Psalm 23 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

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

Pause and pray

In the silence of this moment, I remember the Church gathering today all around the world, and I ask that the House of God would increasingly become a home for every nation:

Father, thank You for Your beautiful, multicultural, intergenerational family, gathering today in so many countries.

Forgive us our many failings, heal our deep divisions, and make us one.

Let strangers be welcomed in Your house today.

May sinners sense amazing grace.

Let preachers and worship leaders step out of the limelight into the twilight to fix the spotlight of their words entirely upon You.

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers locally, lifting my own leaders before the Lord and asking Him to make my own church family more welcoming today.

Pause and pray

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fill me this week as I seek to host You with generous attention and Joy.

Sabbath blessing

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

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

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

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

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

*Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info.

July 04 2022 (click for audio)

Chosen For Mission

Today is Monday the 4th of July (Independence Day for Americans!). This week in Lectio 365 we are continuing our series exploring the lives of biblical characters who epitomize our six core values. In June we prayed with Hannah: a life shaped by prayer; with David: a life shaped by creativity; with Esther: a life shaped by justice; and with Mary and Martha, whose lives were shaped by hospitality. This week we will focus our prayers on the Apostle Paul: a life shaped by mission.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Heavenly Father, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to save it, to save us, to save me. May His mission become my all-consuming motivation, may His compassion move me beyond myself, and may His Great Commission be reignited in my soul today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in the amazing things God has done in my life, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 40...

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the Lord.*

Psalm 40:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I begin exploring this theme of mission in the life of Paul with one of the most dramatic encounters in the whole of the Bible...

Saul was ... breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to

Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked.

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'

Acts 9:1-6 (NIV UK)

The Bible is the story of God intervening. Breaking in dramatically as He does here on the Damascus road. And because mission begins in the very heart of God, it can never be of secondary importance. Neither can mission be something I do for Him unless it is also something I do with Him. As the great theologian Jürgen Moltmann says, 'It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.' When God intervenes on the Damascus road, it isn't just Saul's life that is changed; it is the lives of countless millions who will follow him.

Ask

Mission can feel daunting, demanding, and difficult, especially when I focus on the scale of the challenge. But I pause now to give thanks for the ways in which God broke into my life, and for the people whose lives have been changed – perhaps even eternally - through my witness.

Pause and pray

Saul says, 'Who are you, Lord?' Some people recognize God's presence before they know His name. Thinking of the 4th of July celebrations taking place throughout America today, I ask the Lord to intervene in families as they gather, to speak in surprising ways through ordinary conversations, to reveal Himself to those who don't yet know His name.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the Damascus road now, I listen out carefully for a particular word or phrase that the Holy Spirit is highlighting to me today...

Saul was ... breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked.

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'

Acts 9:1-6 (NIV UK)

Jesus doesn't say 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute my church?' He says: 'Why do you persecute me?' What persecution have I experienced because of my Christian faith? I offer my pain to the Lord now in worship, remembering that He feels it too.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus Christ, Son of God, I revere you as Lord of my life today. Your reputation is more important than mine and Your mission more urgent than my schedule. Let nothing distract me from the good works You have prepared in advance for these coming hours. I prepare my heart to answer anyone who asks me about You today. Lord, here am I. Send me! (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 2:10, Isaiah 6:8)

Yielding Promise

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

Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

Isaiah 46:4 (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.

July 05 2022 (click for audio)

Mentored For Mission

Today is Tuesday the 5th of July. This week we are focusing our prayers on the Apostle Paul: a life shaped by mission. Together we will pray (**P.R.A.Y.**) very simply each day – ‘P’: **PAUSING** to be still. ‘R’: **REJOICING** with a Psalm and **REFLECTING** on a 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

Heavenly Father, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to save it, to save us, to save me. May His mission become my all-consuming motivation, may His compassion move me beyond myself, and may His Great Commission be reignited in my soul today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s extravagant kindness to me today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of King David...

*Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? ...
Because of your promise and according to your will, you have done all these great things and have made them known to your servant.
How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you. We have never even heard of another God like you!
2 Samuel 7:18, 21-22 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a remarkable moment of inflection in the mission of God which takes place in Antioch, modern-day Turkey:

The church in Jerusalem ... sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:22-26 (NIV UK)

Saul had been back in Tarsus, his home town, for about seven years when Barnabas finally came to fetch him. We don't know what he'd been doing during this protracted period. The highlight reel might lead us to think that Paul jumped straight from the Damascus road into frenetic and fruitful mission but, in fact, the Holy Spirit sent him home to prepare quietly for all that was to come. And when the time did eventually come, it took Barnabas to build a platform for Paul's astounding ministry. His undoubted brilliance, his commitment, and his clear call were not enough. Paul also needed seven years to attend to the foundations of his own faith and character, and a mentor to coach him in effective mission for a further year (v. 26).

Ask

Jesus, I ask You to prepare me for the next phase of the mission You have given me. Even if it takes seven years in anonymity as it did for Paul, or thirteen as it did for Joseph, or thirty as it did for You, please don't take any shortcuts in forming my thinking and refining my character. I accept the speed of Your process as well as the strength of Your call.

Pause and pray

'Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Paul.' That was a 250-mile round trip, perhaps a week both ways. I ask the Holy Spirit to show me a younger leader I can encourage this week, even if it costs me time and effort.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I notice the positivity of the language in every line of the text.

The church in Jerusalem ... sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:22-26 (NIV UK)

One commentator describes Barnabas as 'the man with the biggest heart in the church.* His name means 'son of encouragement' and here he is described as 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.' Clearly, he had done some hard work on his own ego because, when 'a great number of people were brought to the Lord' his instinct was to share the profile, fetching Saul, carefully building a platform upon which the younger, less-trusted man could thrive. His ceiling became Paul's floor. His private choices in Antioch enabled the mission of God to advance exponentially around the world.

* William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* in *The Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1953; 2nd edition, 1955) p. 95.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus Christ, Son of God, I revere you as Lord of my life today. Your reputation is more important than mine and Your mission more urgent than my schedule. Let nothing distract me from the good works You have prepared in advance for these coming hours. I prepare my heart to answer anyone who asks me about You today. Lord, here am I. Send me! (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 2:10, Isaiah 6:8)

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me promises to bless me in the private places that others do not see:

*I will give you hidden treasures,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the LORD,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
Isaiah 45:3 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

July 06 2022 (click for audio)

Commissioned For Mission

Today is Wednesday the 6th of July. This week we are focusing our prayers on the Apostle Paul: a man whose life was profoundly shaped by mission.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Heavenly Father, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to save it, to save us, to save me. May His mission become my all-consuming motivation, may His compassion move me beyond myself, and may His Great Commission be reignited in my soul today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's reign over the nations, 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 poor will eat and be satisfied.

All who seek the LORD will praise him.

Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

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

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

For royal power belongs to the LORD.

He rules all the nations

Psalm 22:25-28 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the commissioning of the Apostle Paul for his first missionary journey...

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish

synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:1-5 (NIV UK)

It was as they were ‘worshiping the Lord and fasting’ (v. 2) that the Holy Spirit spoke (presumably through a prophetic word). And then it was ‘after they had fasted and prayed’ (v. 3) that Paul and Barnabas were sent out. Mission is mobilized here, not from a board room but from a prayer room, not from a plan and a program but from a moment of prophetic disruption. Just as the Church was first born when the Spirit moved in a prayer room propelling the Apostles out onto the street so that 3000 were saved, and just as another prayer meeting many years later in Herrnhut, Germany, would launch the modern missions movement, so we see here in Antioch the fusion of prayer, power and propulsion of the gospel out into the world.

Ask

Thinking about the day ahead, I invite the Holy Spirit to disturb my plans, to send me to particular places or people, and to empower me to share the Good News in word and deed.

Pause and pray

I pray now for someone known to me who is serving the Lord cross-culturally, either in my own country or overseas.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I pay particular attention to the names...

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:1-5 (NIV UK)

The names in this passage provide a fascinating insight into the diversity of the early church. The Antioch church included a Greek Cypriot, two North Africans, a powerful acquaintance of Herod, and Saul, a Roman citizen from Tarsus in modern-day Turkey. Such different ethnicities would surely have experienced cultural tensions, but they were united by the gospel of Christ, in whom ‘there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female’ (Gal. 3:28).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I acknowledge that '[my] heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?' (Jer. 17:9) Please show me if there is any division or prejudice in my heart towards people who are unlike me culturally, politically or even theologically. Give me a generous and gracious spirit that believes the best and forgives the worst, for the sake of Your Son who died to make us one. Amen

Yielding Promise

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

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'
Acts 1:8 (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.

July 07 2022 (click for audio)

Rejected Mission

Today is Thursday the 7th of July. This week in Lectio 365 we are focusing our prayers on the Apostle Paul, exploring the many ways in which he was shaped by the mission of 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

Heavenly Father, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Your son, Jesus Christ, to save it, to save us, to save me. May His mission become my all-consuming motivation, may His compassion move me beyond myself, and may His Great Commission be reignited in my soul today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice because God is for me, on my side today, joining with the ancient praise of all His people in the words of Psalm 118...

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

Pause and pray

In today's reading I join Paul and his friend Silas in a Philippian jail. It's midnight. The air is cold. Occasionally I hear the jangling of a chain. No one, it seems, is sleeping...

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.'
Acts 16:25-31 (NIV UK)

Some people are thermometers, reflecting the ambient temperature in the room, and others are thermostats, determining its climate. Paul was certainly a thermostat, 'praying and singing hymns' in spite of his grim circumstances, and certainly not because of them. Several years later he wrote to the church in Philippi, recalling his imprisonment in their city, urging them to: 'Rejoice in the Lord always' and continuing, 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God' (Phil. 4:4,6). Members of the jailer's family, baptized that fateful night, must surely have smiled when they heard these words, recalling Paul's example. The theologian Karl Barth, writing about these verses, describes joy as 'a defiant "Nevertheless!" that Paul sets like a full stop against the Philippians' anxiety.*

* Karl Barth

Ask

What does it mean for me to rejoice in the Lord in spite of my circumstances and not necessarily because of them today?

Pause and pray

Philippi in modern-day Greece was the first place in Europe where the gospel took root. Two thousand years later, Europe – the crucible of Christianity for a thousand years - is the darkest continent on earth: the only one in which the church is declining. I take time now to intercede for Europe, asking the Lord to revive His church once again.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine myself as one of the prisoners caught up in this moment and ask myself what emotions I am experiencing as the drama unfolds...

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.'
Acts 16:25-31 (NIV UK)

'It is heartening to remember,' says the Bible scholar J.B. Phillips, 'that this faith took root and flourished amazingly in conditions that would have killed anything less vital in a matter of weeks. These early Christians were on fire with the conviction that they had become, through Christ, literally sons of God; they were pioneers of a new humanity, founders of a new Kingdom. They still speak to us across the centuries. Perhaps,' he concludes, 'if we believed what they believed, we might achieve what they achieved.'**

** J. B. Phillips, 'Translator's Preface' in *Letters to Young Churches* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), p. xiv.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I'm ashamed to admit how often I fail to rejoice merely because the music is a little off-key, or the song choice seems dated, or I'm feeling a bit grumpy and tired. Unlike Paul and Silas, when I'm rejected or constrained, my tendency is to blame You. Help me instead to respond to the difficult things in my life today with a defiant 'nevertheless' of praise.

Yielding Promise

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

*Trust in [Me] with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to [Me],
and [I] will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

July 08 2022 (click for audio)

Empowered For Mission

Today is Friday the 8th of July. Throughout this week we've been exploring the theme of mission, inviting the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the life of the Apostle Paul.

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

Heavenly Father, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Your son, Jesus Christ, to save it, to save us, to save me. May His mission become my all-consuming motivation, may His compassion move me beyond myself, and may His Great Commission be reignited in my soul today.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Give me an eagerness for your laws
rather than a love for money!
Turn my eyes from worthless things,
and give me life through your word.
Reassure me of your promise,
made to those who fear you.*

Psalm 119:36-38 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on one of the most remarkable seasons in Paul's ministry: a two-year period from AD 52-54 when he lived in the ancient Roman city of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey:

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to those who were ill, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Acts 19:8-12 (NIV UK)

After three long months ‘arguing persuasively’ in the synagogue, Paul is rejected and maligned by his own people. And this brings us to one of the saddest and shortest sentences in the whole Bible: ‘So Paul left them’ (v. 9). Four words (three in the Greek). But Paul doesn’t give up. Instead he rents a non-religious space – a lecture hall - and begins to hold discussions there every single day for two whole years with extraordinary results. Firstly, there is a profound cultural impact as the gospel becomes the talk of the town, and the whole province eventually hears the word of the Lord. And secondly, there is a supernatural impact as Paul comes under such power from the Holy Spirit that people are being healed even through contact with things he has merely touched.

Ask

Paul spends two years slowly ‘discussing’, ‘reasoning’, listening and engaging with the Ephesians. His approach is thoughtful and unhurried.

I ask the Lord for an opportunity to listen to the beliefs of someone else this weekend, and for an opportunity to explain ‘the hope that [I] have’ in Jesus ‘with gentleness and respect’ (1 Peter 3:15).

Pause and pray

I pray now for Christian thought-leaders, teachers, academics, and apologists. May they be filled with ‘the spirit of wisdom and revelation’ to ‘demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God’ (Eph. 1:17; 2 Cor. 10:5)

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to those who were ill, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Acts 19:8-12 (NIV UK)

What word or phrase jumped out at me from these verses? I talk with the Lord about it now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus Christ, Son of God, I’m sorry for the times I have been ashamed of Your gospel, and for other occasions when I’ve talked ‘at’ people about what I believe without first listening to them about what

they believe. Please give me courage to speak more about You, and patience to listen even more than I speak.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me assures me in Psalm 81:

*I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of Egypt.
Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.*
Psalm 81:10 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

July 09 2022 (click for audio)

George Schmidt – Hero Of Mission

Today is Saturday the 9th of July, Feast of the Moravian missionary, George Schmidt, who arrived in South Africa on this day in 1737. On Feast Days we pause from 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 George Schmidt, a pioneering, cross-cultural missionary sent out from the Moravian hundred-year prayer meeting in Herrnhut to the ends of the earth.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to delight in God's harvest today, rejoicing with the ancient praise of all God's people in the first words of the first Psalm:

*Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither –
whatever they do prospers.*

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

On this day in 1737, a 26-year-old Moravian missionary called George Schmidt arrived on the shores of Cape Town, South Africa. Moving inland to Baviaanskloof, or 'The Valley of Baboons', he built himself a little home and planted a pear tree in his new garden. There he befriended the local Khoi tribe - the aboriginal, indigenous people of southern Africa - teaching them new farming techniques so they wouldn't go hungry. It took five years for George to baptize the first Khoi believer.

Members of the State Church were outraged that he had baptized an aboriginal and began to oppose George's mission. He was forced to flee South Africa in 1744, just six years after his arrival, leaving little more than a small pear tree and a handful of Khoi believers.

It would be almost 50 years before the Moravian mission returned to South Africa. 'On arriving back at Baviaanskloof in 1792, three Moravian missionaries located the ruin of Schmidt's original house. In the garden, to their amazement, stood a giant pear tree - the results of the tiny shoot that Schmidt had planted. Even greater surprises were in store. They soon made the acquaintance of an old woman named Magdalena. On finding out who they were, she introduced herself as one of the original believers who had been baptized 50 years previously. The light of faith still burned in her heart, and for half a century this remarkable woman had nurtured and led the indigenous church which Schmidt had founded. She drew out a small leather bag and asked if her daughter could read something from the New Testament. They listened astonished as this second-generation native believer read to them from a Bible given by Schmidt five decades earlier.*

* Phil Anderson, *The Lord of the Ring* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 2006) pp. 149-50.

These new missionaries began developing a self-sufficient, literate agricultural community with a strong spiritual life. Within a decade, the governor of the region was so impressed with the impact of Baviaanskloof, 'The Valley of Baboons', that he renamed it 'Genadendal', which means 'Valley of Grace'.

Ask

Remembering a time when I felt like I failed in mission, I ask the Lord to water the seeds of those best efforts and to somehow make them grow.

Pause and pray

I think of a particularly desperate place in my area that seems forgotten or hopeless and pray that it might become a 'Valley of Grace'.

Pause and pray

Yield

In a clear nod to George Schmidt's legacy, and the work of those Moravian missionaries, "Nelson Mandela changed the name of the official residence of the President of South Africa from 'West Brook' to 'Genadendal'. In making the announcement he expressed a desire that the office of the President should also be 'under God's grace'."** George Schmidt's mission, which seemed to have failed, was in fact used by God for generations to come.

** Ibid. p. 50.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I pray with the final words of the French priest, Dominique Voillaume, who died alone in a Parisienne slum:

'All that is not the love of God has no meaning for me. I can truthfully say that I have no interest in anything but the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. If God wants it to, my life will be useful through my word and witness. If he wants it to, my life will bear fruit through my prayers and sacrifices. But the usefulness of my life is his concern, not mine. It would be indecent of me to worry about that.'***

*** Cited in Pete Greig, *How to Pray* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019) p. 135

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me promises to take the things I have lost and turn them into a mighty harvest:

Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24 (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.

July 10 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer for Mission

Today is Sunday the 10th of July. On this day of rest, we celebrate the fact that the mission of God is not just something that happens to us and through us, but for us and in us; and we anticipate the day when Christ's mission will finally be accomplished once and for all.

In his book *Free Play*, Stephen Nachmanovitch argues that 'perhaps the most radical sociopolitical invention of the past four thousand years was the Sabbath. The practice of the Sabbath,' he says, 'recognizes that we need space and time reserved from the rushing and pressures of everyday life, reserved for going inside ourselves, for rest, review, and revelation.' *

* Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1990), p. 155.

As I settle into prayer now, Lord, help me to truly rest, to review, and to receive Your revelation. Enable me to stop counting the minutes, to relinquish control. Inspire me to live and breathe with greater ease, as an eternal being loved by You.

Pause and pray

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

Pause and pray

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

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

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

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

Pause and pray

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

Thank You, Father, that You loved the world so much that You sent Your only Son, Please help me to love the world with extraordinary generosity.

Thank You, Jesus, that You gave up everything and died for me.
Please help me to lay down my life for those who don't yet know You.
Thank You, Holy Spirit, for giving those first disciples such courage and power.
Please fill me now with that same boldness this week.

Pause and pray

Sabbath blessing

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.
May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-storied.
May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.
May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness
in the arms of God's infinite greatness.
May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.**

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

July 11 2022 (click for audio)

Benedict of Nursia

It's Monday the 11th of July. On Feast Days we pause from praying the Bible to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission. Today therefore we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Benedict of Nursia, a remarkable hero of prayer and hospitality.

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

As I draw near to You God, would You draw near to me? Teach me to pray. Speak Lord, Your servant is listening.

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's wonder today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 84...

*A single day in your courts
is better than a thousand anywhere else!
I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God
than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.
For the LORD God is our sun and our shield.
He gives us grace and glory.
The Lord will withhold no good thing
from those who do what is right.
O Lord of Heaven's Armies,
what joy for those who trust in you.
Psalm 84:10-12 (NLT)*

Benedict was born in Nursia, in the middle of Italy, in the year 480. His father sent him to study in Rome, but he soon left to pursue a spiritual life instead. Not far from Rome, Benedict found a cave and lived there as a hermit for a while, in spiritual and social isolation. Impressed by his devotion, monks from a nearby monastery invited him to become their abbot. However, they quickly grew tired of his strict rules, and they even tried to poison him!

Benedict clearly wasn't put off by this because he founded 12 monasteries throughout Italy during his lifetime.

Pope Benedict XVI said this of Benedict of Nursia:

*'With his life and work St Benedict exercised a fundamental influence on the development of European civilization and culture and helped Europe to emerge from the "dark night of history" that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.'**

* Benedict XVI, 'Saint Benedict of Norcia', Homily given to a general audience at St. Peter's Square. Retrieved 4 August 2010.

One of Benedict's great contributions to Western monasticism, and Western Christianity for that matter, was the Benedictine Rule. In it, he crafted a way of conducting life together that shaped not only his monasteries, but Christians and communities all over the world, for a millennium and a half.

Spiritual formation educator Ruth Haley Barton, writes:

*'A rule of life is a way of ordering our life around the values, practices and relationships that keep us open and available to God for the work of spiritual transformation that only God can bring about.'***

** Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation (Transforming Resources)* (InterVarsity Press, Kindle Edition), p. 14.

The word 'rule' comes from the Latin word *regulus*, and one of the meanings of this word is 'trellis'. In the same way that a trellis gives a plant structure and support for its flourishing, so also a rule of life can provide that for individuals and for communities.

The Benedictine Rule, roughly broken down, gives instructions that bring shape and support to four areas of life in community: prayer, work, relationships, and rest. The desire of the community was to make room for God and make room for love.

Ask

In the quiet I take a few moments now to consider the rhythms of my day.

What is the balance between work and rest in my life?

When and how do I pray?

How do I make time for my relationships?

God, what needs to change in my life right now? What do I need to let go of? What do I need to prioritize?

God, I pray for the communities that I am involved with. How can we shape our lives together so that we preserve love and cultivate Christlikeness? God, I ask You to help us progress in our way of life and faith.

Pause and pray

When I think about the word 'rule', I often think of something heavy and oppressive, but that isn't what Benedict is describing.

In his Rule, he says, 'As we make progress in our way of life and in faith, as our heart expands with the inexpressible sweetness of love, we shall run along the path of God's commandments...'***

***St. Benedict, The *Rule of Benedict*(Penguin Classics, Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 797-803.

Yielding Prayer

As I reflect on Benedict's life and his example, I yield to God as fully as I know how. Using the first few words of a prayer attributed to Benedict himself, I pray:

'O Lord, I place myself in Your hands and dedicate myself to You. I pledge myself to do Your will in all things: To love the Lord God with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength.'

Yielding Promise

I am grateful, Jesus, that as I try to do Your will in all things, You don't call me a servant, but You call me a friend(John 15:15).

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.

July 12 2022 (click for audio)

Whatever You Want

Today is Tuesday the 12th of July, and this week we are looking at King Solomon, to reflect on how his life was shaped by wisdom and learning.

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

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible, would You awaken my heart, expand my mind, and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The Lord is good and does what is right;
he shows the proper path to those who go astray.
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 25:8-10 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

It is early in King Solomon’s reign over Israel. He has gone to Gibeon to offer sacrifices to the Lord, and something unexpected happens...

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’

Solomon answered, ‘You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your

servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.
1 Kings 3:5-10 (NIV UK)

How extraordinary. God tells Solomon to ask him for whatever He wants. Seems risky if you ask me.

I imagine the Lord making me the same offer. 'Ask for whatever you want Me to give you.' If there was one thing, only one thing that I could ask God for, knowing that He would grant it, what would it be, and why?

Ask

God, would you reveal to me the deepest, truest longing of my heart? I hold that longing in Your presence, trusting Your kindness, generosity and goodness.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for those of us who skim the surface of our lives, who, as author Stephen Covey says, 'get caught up in the thick of thin things.' Would You help us clear the clutter and give us a deeper understanding of both what we truly need and of Your heart towards us.*

**Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First*. (Miami: Franklin Covey Co., 2015) Kindle Edition, Loc. 172.*

Pause and pray

Yield

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

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'

Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.'

Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

1 Kings 3:5-10 (NIV UK)

I can relate to Solomon in this moment, particularly when he says, 'I am only a little child.' My life and my varied responsibilities are far too big for me, and I constantly feel out of my depth. Situations are

too complex, the environment changing too rapidly. I can't even imagine what it must have been like to be a newly crowned king!

What does Solomon choose as the most essential need for his life in leadership? Wisdom. A discerning heart.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, Your ways are higher than mine. Your thoughts are wiser. Today I give you my foolishness, frailty, and my insufficiency, and I ask for Your wisdom. God, would You show me Your ways and give me a discerning heart?

Yielding Promise

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

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

James 1:5 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

July 13 2022 (click for audio)

Who Is the Liar?

Today is Wednesday the 13th of July, and this week we are reflecting on the life of King Solomon, to see how he was shaped by wisdom and learning.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind, and shape my identity today.

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 147...

*Praise the LORD! ...
He heals the brokenhearted
and bandages their wounds.
He counts the stars
and calls them all by name.
How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!
His understanding is beyond comprehension!
The LORD supports the humble,
but he brings the wicked down into the dust.*

Psalm 147:1,3-6, (NLT)

Pause and pray

Almost immediately after Solomon asks God for wisdom, he is confronted by a very tricky situation: two women have given birth to babies, but one has died. Now they are both claiming that the living baby is theirs.

*The king said, 'This one says, "My son is alive and your son is dead," while that one says, "No! Your son is dead and mine is alive."'
Then the king said, 'Bring me a sword.' So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: 'Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.'
The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, 'Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!'
But the other said, 'Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!'*

Then the king gave his ruling: ‘Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.’

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

1 Kings 3:23-28 (NIV UK)

Emotions are high. The situation seems desperate. Somebody is lying, but who? The first thing that Solomon does is listen. He gives each of the women an opportunity to tell their story. I imagine him closely watching their faces, and their body language as they speak. Wisdom takes time to listen.

Ask

God please forgive me for the times I have been reactive: slow to listen and quick to speak or act. Please help me to cultivate the space between stimulus and response, and to make room for wisdom.

Pause and pray

Today I pray for those in authority in my country. In the midst of the clamor of voices and competing agendas, in situations where it’s hard to know whether people are telling the truth or not, would You help them to listen? To not be reactive, but to create space for wise decisions. I pray for my national leaders and their team right now.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

The king said, ‘This one says, “My son is alive and your son is dead,” while that one says, “No! Your son is dead and mine is alive.”’

Then the king said, ‘Bring me a sword.’ So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: ‘Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.’

The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, ‘Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!’

But the other said, ‘Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!’

Then the king gave his ruling: ‘Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.’

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

1 Kings 3:23-28 (NIV UK)

I wonder if Solomon was listening to God as well as listening to the women? He came up with a simple but effective solution, challenging the women to reveal their deepest motivations, and bringing clarity and resolution to the situation.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield to God today with a blessing from poet John O'Donohue:

*May [I] know the wisdom of deep listening, the healing of wholesome words, the encouragement of the appreciative gaze, the decorum of held dignity, The springtime edge of the bleak question. May [I] have a mind that loves frontiers so that [I] can evoke the bright fields that lie beyond the view of the regular eye. May [I] have good friends to mirror [my] blind spots. May leadership be for [me] a true adventure of growth.**

*John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*(Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony), Kindle Edition. pp. 151-152.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I share the longing of the psalmist and say:

*Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.*

Psalm 25:5 (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.

July 14 2022 (click for audio)

Building With Wisdom

Today is Thursday the 14th of July, and this week we are exploring the life of Solomon and his acquisition of wisdom.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind, and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's righteousness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 5...

*Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.
Lead me in the right path, O LORD,
or my enemies will conquer me.
Make your way plain for me to follow.
Psalm 5:7-8 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Once he had been established as king over Israel, Solomon began to build a permanent place for God's presence among the people.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD...

The word of the LORD came to Solomon: 'As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.'

So Solomon built the temple and completed it.

1 Kings 6:1,11-14 (NIV UK)

Solomon understood that he wasn't just building with bricks and mortar. He reflected later in his proverbs that, 'By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures' (Proverbs 24:3-4).

Ask

What am I building? Maybe a family? A ministry? A workplace environment? How might I build with wisdom and understanding as well as systems and structures?

God, I ask You to put the right materials in my heart, my head and in my hands, so that whatever I build may reflect Your glory.

Pause and pray

I pray for those who are entrusted with building the church: pastors, vicars, priests, church staff and teams. Ultimately may they create something whose architect is God. Give them wisdom and understanding as they build. In the quiet, I pray for my church leaders Now.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD...

The word of the LORD came to Solomon: 'As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.'

So Solomon built the temple and completed it.

1 Kings 6:1,11-14 (NIV UK)

In this passage, God links the promise of His presence to Solomon's willingness to obey. Theologian J.I. Packer says: *In Scripture wisdom is a moral as well as an intellectual quality... For us to be truly wise, in the Bible sense, our intelligence and cleverness must be harnessed to a right end. Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.**

*J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*(London: John Murray Press, 2011), Kindle Edition. Loc. 1284.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, would you give me the inclination to choose the best and highest goal. I yield my intelligence and cleverness to You today, and I ask for willingness and wisdom.

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 19:

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Exodus 19:5 (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.

July 15 2022 (click for audio)

What's The Invitation?

Today is Friday the 15th of July, and this week we are continuing to explore wisdom and learning, and the life of King Solomon.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind, and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's unfailing love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 17...

I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God.

Bend down and listen as I pray.

Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways.

By your mighty power you rescue

those who seek refuge from their enemies.

Psalm 17:6-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

The temple is completed, and now the Lord speaks to Solomon again.

When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said:

'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

'When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

2 Chronicles 7:11-15 (NIV UK)

Now that the temple is built and the presence of the Lord is established among the people, Solomon is invited to exercise wisdom on behalf of the whole nation. First of all, he must assess the challenges facing Israel – in this case the challenges of drought, locusts and plague. Then he needs to discern the

Lord's invitation to His people in the midst of the challenges – in this case the invitation to self-examination, repentance and prayer.

Ask

Lord, what challenges am I facing these days?

Lord, what is Your invitation to me in the midst of those challenges? How might You want me to respond?

Pause and pray

Lord again I pray for my national leaders. Would you give them wisdom and discernment? Would You help them correctly assess the challenges my nation is facing. Lord may they be open to discerning your invitation to them, and to our nation, in the midst of those challenges.

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 Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said:

'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

'When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

2 Chronicles 7:11-15 (NIV UK)

Self-examination is essential to the acquisition of wisdom. Author Ruth Haley Barton invites us to explore this rich spiritual practice.

Self-examination is a practice that facilitates spiritual awakening—an awakening to the presence of God as God really is and an awakening to ourselves as we really are. When practiced rightly, it leads us into a greater sense of God's constant loving presence in our life, it fosters a celebration of our created self, it offers us a safe place to see and name those places where we are not like Christ, and it opens us up to deeper levels of spiritual transformation. Self-examination is the Christian practice that opens us to the love we seek.*

*Ruth Haley. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*(Transforming Resources) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009). Kindle Edition. p. 93.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father, I thank you for Your constant loving presence. Thank You for the way You have uniquely crafted and created me – I celebrate all Your hands have made. I invite You, in Your kindness, to lead me to repentance as needed, so I can become more like Jesus.

Yielding Promise

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

If [you] confess [your] sins, [I am] faithful and just and will forgive [you your] sins and purify [you] from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

July 16 2022 (click for audio)

Inception Point

Today is Saturday the 16th of July, the final day of our week of exploration of King Solomon's acquisition of wisdom.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Holy Spirit, my teacher, as I dive into the Bible would You awaken my heart, expand my mind, and shape my identity today.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*I praise you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

*I have recited aloud
all the regulations you have given us.*

*I have rejoiced in your laws
as much as in riches.*

*I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.*

*I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.*

Psalm 119-12-16 (NLT)

Pause and pray

The book of Proverbs is attributed mostly to Solomon as a collection of his wisdom. Today I reflect on the prologue of the book:

*The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young –*

*let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance –
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
Proverbs 1:1-7 (NIV UK)*

Having been shaped by wisdom, Solomon is a great gift to the people he leads, and the ancient world that he inhabits. Our modern world is in desperate need of those who have a wealth of godly wisdom.

Philosopher Dallas Willard states:

*The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes—a time for men and women to be heroic in faith and in spiritual character and power.**

* Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009). Kindle Edition. Loc. 136.

Ask

Do I feel like I'm lacking in experience and wisdom? Or perhaps I've already accumulated a little bit but feel the need for more?

Lord, would You help me to grow in wisdom – wisdom that is 'first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere?' (James 3:17)

Pause and pray

Lord, would You raise up spiritual heroes – men and women who are heroic in faith, in spiritual character and in power and in wisdom. And would You position them in every sphere of society.

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 proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young –
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance –*

*for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
Proverbs 1:1-7 (NIV UK)*

What is the beginning of wisdom – what is its inception point? Solomon says it's the fear of the Lord, the reverence of God and a respect of His ways.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God your ways are higher, better, more beautiful, and brighter than mine. I yield myself to the wisdom of heaven. Shape me with Your wisdom.

Yielding Promise

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

*To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.
Ecclesiastes 2:26a (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.

July 17 2022 (click for audio)

Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 17th of July and we pause our normal rhythm and pray a special Sabbath prayer.

I've been thinking this week about the biblical priority of learning. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer now, I ask God to renew in me a tender, teachable heart.

Pause and pray

*I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you...
Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.
I am a stranger on earth;
do not hide your commands from me.
My soul is consumed with longing
for your laws at all times...
Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.*

Psalm 119:11,18–20,24 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

In his book about the Sabbath, Wayne Muller says:

*'Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight.'**

*Wayne Muller, Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives(London: Bantam Press, 2000) p. 1.

Holy Spirit, help me to rest today, and as I do so, give me wisdom. I welcome Your presence and revelation within my life. Converse with my spirit so that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart may be acceptable in Your sight today.

Pause and pray

I pray for the preaching of God's Word around the world today:

Father, I thank You that millions of people will learn from the Bible today. Please speak powerfully to convict, to comfort and to conform our minds to Yours.

Jesus, I pray today for all the children learning about You. Thank You that You always love to put them first. Help me to be more trusting, humble, and playful like them.

Holy Spirit, revive us today. Inspire politicians and educators, artists and journalists, economists and scientists at church today, with the kinds of ideas that can change the world for good.

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers in my own local community, naming someone I know who is either a student, an educator, or a parent as they disciple their own children.

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info

July 18 2022 (click for audio)

God's Love Gives Me Life

Today is Monday the 18th of July, and we are beginning a new three-week Lectio 365 series on the theme of hope. This week we are exploring hope for my life.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

Psalm 36:9 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on some of the powerful words Jesus said in a late-night conversation with Nicodemus, a seeker of truth...

'No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:13-16 (NIV UK)

Jesus was speaking prophetically of His death - the place of disturbing healing - where He, the Son of Man, was lifted up as the suffering Saviour, carrying the sins of the world.

The cross is still a place of mystery: Paul calls it both a 'stumbling block' (1 Cor. 1:23) and the power and wisdom of God.

Ask

Do I see the cross as the place where Jesus is lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life? Do I really believe that there is no power in my life, past, present, or future, that holds more authority than the cross of Jesus Christ?

Father, I pray that You would fill my heart today with wonder and confidence in Your cross. Allow me to see the way Your love gives me life, and to live in the power of that love.

Pause and pray

Holy Spirit, the cross is still a place of mystery for me. I pray that today You would give me the words and the way to share the hope of eternal life with someone in my local community. Give me boldness to speak of the hope of the cross.

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.

'No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'
'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'
John 3:13-16 (NIV UK)

Eternal life. Life to the full, and never-ending. In a world of painful and necessary endings, the hope of eternal life is endlessly beautiful. God offers us this hope through the person and work of His only Son, and only asks that we believe in Him. The message is simple but eternally powerful.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Come Holy Spirit,
Renew my hope,
Restore my joy,
Through the power of
Your eternal 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 2 Thessalonians:

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

July 19 2022 (click for audio)

Forgiveness and Redemption

Today is Tuesday the 19th of July, and this week we are exploring hope for my life. Together we will pray (**P.R.A.Y**) very simply each day – ‘P’: **PAUSING** to be still. ‘R’: **REJOICING** with a Psalm and **REFLECTING** on a Scripture. ‘A’: **ASKING** God to help us and others and ‘Y’: **YIELDING** to His will in our lives, come what may.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God’s generous forgiveness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 65...

*Though we are overwhelmed by our sins,
you forgive them all.
Psalm 65:3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on a passage from the book of Hebrews, written for those who, for more than a thousand years, entered the presence of God through a bloody sacrifice and a priestly lineage...

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:19-23 (NIV UK)

The sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross quite literally tore open the veil between God and humanity, and it gives me this tremendous invitation: draw near to God with a sincere heart.

I think about the barriers I still allow to be drawn between my heart and God’s love. I consider the worries that dull my attention to His loving presence. I reflect on the ways that I am hesitant to receive this full assurance of faith and hope.

Ask

Father, I want to enter into Your presence with sincere and transparent expectancy. I imagine myself sitting with You like a small child, held as one deeply loved. I ask for the faith of a child again today.

Pause and pray

Jesus, reveal to me a place of wound or insecurity in one of my relationships. Teach me how to gently release my places of pain in the presence of Your love. Show me how to demonstrate Your sincere and faithful love in one of my relationships today.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:19-23 (NIV UK)

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

I want to hold unswervingly to hope. I think of the swerving, winding, rural roads of Cornwall, where I live. I think of the collisions, the traffic, and the damage that occurs when drivers swerve into hedges, other cars, and side lanes. I think of the ease of driving on a straight and clear road, and the sure and certain hope I have in Jesus Christ that the way to God has been made uncomplicated and direct.

My heart is wavering, my hope is flickering, but the faithful promise of God is unfailing and certain.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

*Holy Spirit,
I yield my aimless, wandering, wild thoughts
to the peace of Your presence
Root my soul through the power of Your Word,
Fill me with the assurance
of Your salvation, near to me.*

Yielding Promise

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

And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.
Colossians 1:27b (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.

[July 20 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Children Of God

Today is Wednesday the 20th of July, and this week, as part of our series on hope, we are exploring hope for my life.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's grace today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 84...

For the LORD God is our sun and our shield.

He gives us grace and glory.

The LORD will withhold no good thing

from those who do what is right.

Psalm 84:11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Jesus, the Creator of the world, who is introduced by John, the beloved disciple as...

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:9-14 (NIV UK)

I consider the imagery here of children, born not by choice or force, but born into the family of God. I think of the way my family and history shapes my understanding of love and belonging. I am reminded in the words of Gregory Coles that

'The ones we linger with are the ones we grow to love. There is no deep belonging without

*deep lingering.’**

* Gregory Coles, *No Longer Strangers*, (p. 136), (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2021)

Ask

*Holy Spirit,
Teach me to linger in Your presence.
Remind me that I was made to know
and be known by You.
Allow me to recognize You,
My Creator, the True Light of the world.
My love.*

Pause and pray

Jesus, I think of a friend in my life who does not yet know Your love.
I pray that You would expand their vision to see You,
The way, the truth, the life,
The hope of all the world.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:9-14 (NIV UK)

The Word of God, wrapped in human flesh, came to live and dwell on Earth. He knew cuts, bruises and the deepest betrayals, tenderness and trauma, sunshine, laughter, caterpillars, and fishing poles.

Today, I am captured again by the simple, radiant glory of Jesus, God of gods, only Son of the Father, living among His creation, full of grace and truth.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus,
May I see Your glory in a new way today.

Refresh my expectation that Your Spirit
Will fill my days with grace and truth.

Yielding Promise

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

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon!”

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s holy people.

Revelation 22:20-21 (NLT)

Closing Prayer

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

July 21 2022 (click for audio)

Hope And Strength

Today is Thursday the 21st of July, and this week we are exploring hope for my life.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

The LORD rules over the floodwaters.

The LORD reigns as king forever.

The LORD gives his people strength.

The LORD blesses them with peace.

Psalm 29:10-11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the words of the prophet Isaiah, who spoke a beautiful blessing over the people of God...

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,

and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary

and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary,

and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the LORD

will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV UK)

Today, I woke up weary. My to-do list was full, my senses were scattered, and my energy was drained. I hear the words of this passage and they speak to me of an eternal hope: the hope that my God, the everlasting God, is never tired or weary. I need this kind of strength today.

Ask

And so I relax my head and shoulders. I breathe deeply. And I surrender to the loving care of a powerful God who promises to give me strength.

Father, I pray that You would increase my faith. I ask for a deeper confidence in Your unfailing love, and I pray for the blessing of your peace over my everyday, endless activities. May I rest knowing Your kindness towards me.

Pause and pray

I think of a friend who is in a particular place of weariness.

Jesus, will You be with them. I pray that You would restore and renew their joy and show me how I can share Your love with them today.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,

and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary

and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary,

and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the LORD

will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV UK)

Soaring birds are an image of majesty. They dance in the sky playfully. Flying can be for transport, finding food, and migration, but when I watch an eagle (or a seagull) soaring, I imagine the joy of their dance. I receive the soaring, renewed, playful strength of the everlasting God.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, I pray that You would raise my expectation for a playful, expansive, joyful relationship with You and others. Fill my heart with hope today.

Yielding Promise

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

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28-29 (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.

July 22 2022 (click for audio)

Hope In Suffering

Today is Friday the 22nd of July, and this week we are exploring hope for my life.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 136...

He remembered us in our weakness.

His faithful love endures forever.

He saved us from our enemies.

His faithful love endures forever.

Psalm 136:23-24 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the words of the Apostle Paul written to the church in Rome...

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV UK)

I have peace with God. My world is a place of many battles: physical wars, relational dramas, the places of unexpected pain and misunderstanding. Some days feel like a constant uphill challenge. I receive the simple joy of these words: I have peace with God through Jesus Christ. I have been given access by faith. I now stand by grace.

Ask

Jesus, I ask You for the grace to rest. I recognize that the battle has already been won, but I see the places in my life where my heart is still at war. I ask that You will give me the peace of Your presence.

Pause and pray

Father, I pray for a particular place of conflict in our world. I ask You to show men and women of faith how to carry the peace of Your presence. I ask for miracles, faith, and hope to rise, even in places where the battle is raging.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV UK)

When I was a child, I often played with dominoes, and this passage reminds me of a series of dominoes.

Suffering produces perseverance.

Perseverance produces character

Character produces hope.

Hope reminds us that God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

I often struggle to give thanks in the times when I am suffering. And yet, today, this passage strikes me as beautiful, because I see that suffering can become a doorway through which the Spirit enters my heart.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit,

I receive your presence.

May suffering produce perseverance.

May perseverance produce character

May character produce hope.

Be with me today.

Yielding Promise

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

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:18-19a (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.

July 23 2022 (click for audio)

Susanna Wesley: Hero Of Prayer And Learning

It's Saturday the 23rd of July and today we're pausing our series on hope to learn from the 'Mother of Methodism', Susanna Wesley, who died on this day in 1742. On Feast Days we pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission. Today we are thanking God for the inspirational life of Susanna Wesley, an extraordinary hero of prayer and learning.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Whenever Susanna Wesley wanted to pray, she would pull her apron over her head to create a moment and a place of privacy.

In a similar way, as I draw near to You now, Lord, help me to shut out the many distractions and demands of the world in order to focus my heart and mind entirely upon You.

Rejoice and Reflect

I celebrate the Lord as my hope and my hiding place today, joining in the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 32...

*For you are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of victory.
The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."
Many sorrows come to the wicked,
but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD.
So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him!
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!
Psalm 32:7-11 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles, the founders of Methodism, endured a difficult marriage to a penniless preacher who was imprisoned twice. Their home was burned down twice. And tragically

nine of their nineteen children died in infancy. Somehow, Susanna raised their remaining ten children almost single-handedly, regarding motherhood as a vocation from God.

With nowhere at home to pray privately, Susanna's children quickly learned that when her apron was over her head, their mother was not to be disturbed. In this unusual posture, she would pour out her heart to God, no doubt mourning her lost babies, interceding for her infuriating husband, and praying for each of her children by name.

Susanna took education seriously, home-schooling her children for six hours a day, teaching her seven daughters the same as her three sons. She also gave an extra hour of exclusive time to each child each week. 'I look upon every soul under my charge,' she explained, 'as a talent committed to me under a trust.*

*John Whitehead, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley: Some Time Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford* Volume 1, (Arkose Press, 2015), pp. 46-47.

Ask

Who are the 'souls under my charge ... committed to me under a trust'? How might I give them my undivided attention this week? I pray for them now by name.

Pause and pray

Thinking of the Christian parents I know, seeking to raise their children well, I ask You, Lord, to inspire them with fresh imagination, equip them with renewed strength and restore their reserves of grace today.

Pause and pray

Yield

Susanna Wesley was a formidable leader long before her sons John and Charles rose to fame. When her husband, the Rector of Epworth parish church, was imprisoned for financial mismanagement, and his replacement in the pulpit failed miserably to preach the gospel, Susanna took matters into her own hands.

She launched a Sunday school for her children in the kitchen; it attracted so many of their neighbors that it had to be reconvened in the barn. Before long, 200 people were gathering every Sunday to worship, pray, and listen to Susanna reading sermons.

Susanna Wesley was a world-class leader, educator and prayer warrior, but her mission field was her own tribe. She applied herself to this task tirelessly, praying faithfully for those ten children, and teaching them diligently. She was a housewife with a hard life from a small town in rural England, but she became the mother of some eighty million Methodists in more than 130 nations today.

Yielding Prayer

I use one of Susanna Wesley's prayers as my own today:

*Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the church, or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Your presence. So may my every word and action have a moral content. May all the happenings of my life prove useful and beneficial to me. May all things instruct me and afford me an opportunity of exercising some virtue and daily learning and growing toward Your likeness. Amen ***

**Pete Greig, How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2019), p. 31.

Yielding Promise

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

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Psalm 32:8 (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.

July 24 2022 (click for audio)

Hope Sabbath

It's Sunday the 24th of July, and today we pause our regular P.R.A.Y. rhythms to pray a special Sabbath prayer.

Theologian William Willimon writes,

*'Sabbath keeping is a publicly enacted sign of our trust that God keeps the world, therefore we do not have to. God welcomes our labors, but our contributions to the world have their limits. If even God trusted creation enough to be confident that the world would continue while God rested, so should we.'**

*William Willimon, The Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry.(p.329), cited in Eugene Peterson, Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places(Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 129.

Throughout this week, I've been reflecting on the theme of hope. As I settle into this time of prayer, I open my mind to grasp the hope to which God has called me (Ephesians 1:18), and I open my heart to receive the hope God wants to pour into and through me (ROMANS 15:13).

Pause and pray

A Sabbath prayer from Psalm 31:

*Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
In my alarm I said,
'I am cut off from your sight!'
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
Love the LORD, all his faithful people!
The LORD preserves those who are true to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.
Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.*
Psalm 31:21-24 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your Word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will be bold and courageous as they preach the good news. And I pray that those who listen will discover that You have great 'plans to give them hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11).

Jesus, I pray especially for those who are finding life painful or difficult right now. Draw near to them and give them strength to hold onto hope. Remind them today that You are faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

And Holy Spirit, fill the Church today. Help her to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12)

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers in my own local community, naming those I know who are bringing hope in simple ways to their homes, their schools, or their workplaces.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, I receive the promise and the commissioning in the words of the apostle Paul's prayer from the book of Romans:

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

Romans 15:13

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Light In Darkness

Today is Monday the 25th of July, and we are continuing our three-week series exploring hope. This week, we will be looking at the Bible's teaching on hope for the world

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's creative power 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 reflecting on the powerful and poetic opening words of John's gospel...

*In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.*

*The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.
John 1:1-5 (NLT)*

These words sound similar to the first verses in the Bible - the creation story of Genesis – where the first words of God bring light to earth, and the light is separated from the darkness (Gen. 1:4). Here, John is highlighting an important difference: this light is not separated from darkness but shines in it.

Ask

Are there situations in my life, or in the lives of those I love, that need the light of Jesus to shine in them today?

Lord of light, shine in the darkness.

Pause and pray

When I think of the world, what situations feel overwhelmingly dark? I take a moment to invite God's light to shine in these places as I pray now.

Lord of light, shine in the darkness.

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 beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.
John 1:1-5 (NLT)*

John's introduction to Jesus isn't like some of the other Gospel accounts. There's no mention of His arrival as a human baby. Instead, Jesus is announced as God: creator of the earth, the true light for earth's darkness.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, today I fix my eyes beyond the darkness and seek your light: light that brings hope and life to everyone who encounters it.

Yielding Promise

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

You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 (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.

July 26 2022 (click for audio)

Surprising Good News

Today is Tuesday the 26th of July, and this week we are exploring the Bible's teaching on hope, with a particular focus on hope for the world.

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

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

I will praise you in the great assembly.

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

The poor will eat and be satisfied.

All who seek the LORD will praise him.

Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

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

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

Psalm 22:25-27 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on what happened when Jesus taught in his hometown of Nazareth...

[Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

*and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4:16-21 (NIV UK)

Jesus' words to the crowd reveal His mission and His top priority. It wasn't to uphold religious laws or bless the 'righteous', but to actively seek out the overlooked and enslaved and set them free. Jesus is sharing hope, not for those in the synagogue, but for the very people who would never be invited inside.

Ask

Do my priorities align with Jesus' priorities?

Spirit of the Lord, fall afresh on me today. Anoint me to proclaim good news to the people You lead me to.

Pause and pray

I think of my own church community for a moment. We like to think we are welcoming, but are we as welcoming as Jesus?

Holy Spirit, help me, and help my community to focus our priorities on sharing Your good news with those who feel that they would never be invited inside.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

[Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4:16-21 (NIV UK)

Jesus is speaking these words to a community that He knew well: the place where He'd spent every Sabbath day as a child. But, in this familiar context, Jesus is asserting His new identity and mission with boldness and confidence.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, You call me to a life that means stepping outside my comfortable community to bring Your good news to the world. Show me how to live in that reality, 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 Exodus...

But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Exodus 9:16 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

[**July 27 2022 \(click for audio\)**](#)

Spirit of Victory

Today is Wednesday the 27th of July, and this week we are exploring what hope for the world looks like.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's mighty power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 67...

*May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.*

May the nations praise you, O God.

Yes, may all the nations praise you.

*Let the whole world sing for joy,
because you govern the nations with justice
and guide the people of the whole world.*

Psalm 67:2-4 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I join Jesus after He has controversially healed a man on the Sabbath, a day of rest...

But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell others about him. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*'Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,*

*and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope.'*
Matthew 12:14-21 (NIV UK)

The way of the world and the way of the servant that Isaiah describes are very different. In contrast to the Pharisees' violent reaction, plotting to kill Jesus, Matthew shows that the peaceful, healing actions of Jesus are the beginnings of justice, not just for one community, but for the nations.

Ask

'In his name, the nations will put their hope.'

What is my hope in, today? I take a moment to reflect on where I might need to refocus on Jesus.

Pause and pray

'In his name, the nations will put their hope.'

Today I pray for hope to reign in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and other nations where there is war, poverty and injustice.

Come, Holy Spirit.

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...

*But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.
Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all
who were ill. He warned them not to tell others about him. This was to fulfill what was spoken
through the prophet Isaiah:
'Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope.'*
Matthew 12:14-21 (NIV UK)

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

I'm struck that it is the Spirit that brings about the justice and victory that is promised; the power of the Spirit that can intervene in every situation and bring justice.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Holy Spirit, You are able to work powerfully to bring justice and hope. Use me. Use my community. Use Your Church to bring hope to the nations.

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:

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 5:5 (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.

[July 28 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

Countercultural Community

Today is Thursday the 28th of July and this week, as part of our series on hope, we are exploring the Bible's teaching on hope for the world.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.

You guard all that is mine.

The land you have given me is a pleasant land.

What a wonderful inheritance!

*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 16:5-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on Paul's encouragement to the early Church community in Rome...

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:9-13 (NIV UK)

The Church community in Rome was facing persecution, and so meeting together was risky, and sometimes dangerous. Paul's words, therefore, don't seem to make sense. But he's reminding them to live counter culturally: to live a life of love and devotion to one another, even when circumstances are bleak or challenging.

Ask

Who are the people who are devoted to me, who stop me from feeling alone during life's challenges? I take a moment to thank God for them today.

Pause and pray

There has been a global increase in loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started,* and people all over the world continue to be fearful and uncertain about the future.

*<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2022/05/covid-19-increase-loneliness>

God of hope, help us, Your Church, to play our part in loving those who are lonely and fearful. I begin by praying for someone I know who is feeling lonely or afraid 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.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:9-13 (NIV UK)

Honoring, sharing and serving in community requires personal sacrifice; it's going to cost me. I need to learn how to let go of wealth, status, and maybe even my dreams, so that others can thrive.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Show me, God, where You are asking me to make a sacrifice on behalf of others. I yield to Your way of community 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 Galatians:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Galatians 5:13-14 (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.

[July 29 2022 \(click for audio\)](#)

God's Trademark

Today is Friday the 29th of July and this week we are exploring the Bible's teaching on hope for the world.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Sing a new song to the LORD!
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
Sing to the LORD; praise his name.
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
Psalm 96:1-3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on another psalm, written by David, revealing God's care for the world...

*The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with corn,
for so you have ordained it.
You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.*

*The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
Psalm 65:8-12 (NIV UK)*

I live in an environment that has been skillfully created and intricately crafted, pointing towards the majesty and goodness of its Creator. But David reveals to me that God did not just create, but continues to care for creation, too.

Ask

What's my relationship with creation? Do I simply admire its beauty, or am I willing to invest and care for it too?

Creator God, show me the world through Your eyes, and help me to care for it as You do.

Pause and pray

Climate scientists have warned that the world is getting warmer, and that warming needs to stay under 1.5 degrees. The secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said in May this year:

'The 1.5°C figure is not some random statistic. It is rather an indicator of the point at which climate impacts will become increasingly harmful for people and indeed the entire planet.'*

* *WMO Secretary-General Prof. Petteri Taalas, <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-update-5050-chance-of-global-temperature-temporarily-reaching-15%C2%B0C-threshold>.*

God, I pray for wisdom for global leaders and those with the power to make decisions that will impact the future of the planet we live on.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with corn,
for so you have ordained it.
You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
You crown the year with your bounty,*

*and your carts overflow with abundance.
The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
Psalm 65:8-12 (NIV UK)*

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

I am struck by the phrase 'The streams of God are filled with water'. At first it sounds as if this sentence is the wrong way round, until I realize that it's a statement of ownership; the streams belong to God. All of creation carries God's trademark.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, Your creation points towards You. Today I pay close attention to what You want to reveal to me about Your beauty and Your care.

Yielding Promise

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

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
Colossians 1:15-17 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

July 30 2022 (click for audio)

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

It's Saturday the 30th of July, and this week we have been reflecting on what hope for the world looks like. Today, we're going to pray very specifically into one area of injustice, where God's hope is urgently needed. It's World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, a day to raise awareness of the prevalence of human trafficking around the world.

(Please note, today's devotional contains facts and information about human trafficking that some may find upsetting.)

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

God of hope, I put my trust in You. As I spend this time with You, may Your joy and peace fill me, and Your hope overflow through me. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's rescuing power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 35...

Then I will rejoice in the LORD.

I will be glad because he rescues me.

With every bone in my body I will praise him:

“Lord, who can compare with you?

Who else rescues the helpless from the strong?

Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?”

Psalm 35:9-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Human trafficking is a global crime that affects the most vulnerable, and it's worth tens of billions of pounds every year. It has many forms, including exploitation in the sex, entertainment, and hospitality industries; and working in factories and on construction sites in dangerous and inhumane conditions. Globally, one in three victims are children, and nearly 50% of victims are women.*

***<https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-human-trafficking-day>**

In 2018, around 50,000 trafficking victims were detected and reported in 148 countries. However, a 2020 report by the UN suggested that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic would result in even

more people being trafficked.**

**https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf

Refugees are often an easy target for traffickers. The ongoing war in Ukraine means that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens are being displaced, and traffickers are taking advantage of the crisis. Among charities there have been reports that Ukrainian women and children are being trafficked, falsely offered jobs and homes that don't exist.

Ask

I pause for a moment to allow the terrible reality of this situation to sink in.

Drawing on the words of today's psalm, I cry out:

Abba Father, rescue the helpless from the strong. Protect those who are vulnerable and poor from those who would rob them of their freedom and their very lives.

Pause and pray

All over the world, organizations and charities like International Justice Mission (IJM), Justice and Care, and many others, are working to fight against human trafficking, to care for the vulnerable and to see perpetrators brought to justice.

God of justice, strengthen these teams and the work of their hands. I ask You to give supernatural help, provision, and support to these charities as they bring light into the darkness.

Pause and pray

Yield

Despite the many challenges, there are glimmers of hope. Service providers and healthcare workers are being trained to spot and support those who have been trafficked. Charities are raising awareness of the issues and helping to educate those who are the most vulnerable. National, 24-hour helplines have been set up. And the number of people convicted of the crime of trafficking is increasing.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Using words that Jesus himself quoted from the book of Isaiah, I pray:

Come, Lord Jesus, bind up the broken-hearted.

Come, Lord Jesus, set free those who are oppressed.

Come, Lord Jesus, release those who are captives.

Come, Lord Jesus! My hope is in You.

Yielding Promise

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

*For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
Isaiah 61:8 (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.

July 31 2022 (click for audio)

Hope Sabbath

It's Sunday the 31st of July, and today we pause our regular P.R.A.Y. rhythms to pray a special Sabbath prayer.

Theologian William Willimon writes, 'Sabbath keeping is a publicly enacted sign of our trust that God keeps the world, therefore we do not have to. God welcomes our labors, but our contributions to the world have their limits. If even God trusted creation enough to be confident that the world would continue while God rested, so should we.*'

*William Willimon, *The Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry.*(p.329), cited in Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*(Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p.129.

Throughout this week, I've been reflecting on the theme of hope. As I settle into this time of prayer, I open my mind to grasp the hope to which God has called me (Ephesians 1:18), and I open my heart to receive the hope God wants to pour into and through me (Romans 15:13)

Pause and pray

A Sabbath prayer from Psalm 31:

*Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
In my alarm I said,
'I am cut off from your sight!'
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
Love the LORD, all his faithful people!
The LORD preserves those who are true to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.
Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.*
Psalm 31:21-24 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Father God, I thank You that millions of people around the world will hear Your word being preached today. I pray that those who speak will be bold and courageous as they preach the good news. And I pray that those who listen will discover that You have great 'plans to give them hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11).

Jesus, I pray especially for those who are finding life painful or difficult right now. Draw near to them and give them strength to hold onto hope. Remind them today that You are faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

And Holy Spirit, fill the Church today. Help her to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers in my own local community, naming those I know who are bringing hope in simple ways to their homes, their schools or their workplaces.

Pause and pray

As I bring this short Sabbath prayer to a close, I receive the promise and the commissioning in the words of the apostle Paul's prayer from the book of Romans:

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

Romans 15:13 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

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

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

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

**Pete Greig, Sabbath Blessing, petegreig.info