

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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Sept 2022

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Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

Month of Sept 2022

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September 01 2022 (click for audio)

Overturning Tables

Today is Thursday the 1st of September, and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and listening for His call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my story. Help me know You more clearly, love You more dearly and follow You more nearly, each and every day.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's justice and mercy, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 15...

Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord?

Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?

*Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right,
speaking the truth from sincere hearts.*

Those who refuse to gossip

or harm their neighbors

or speak evil of their friends...

*Those who lend money without charging interest,
and who cannot be bribed to lie about the innocent.*

Such people will stand firm forever.

Psalm 15:1-3,5 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Jesus' return to Jerusalem, the day after He'd turned up riding on the back of a colt. This time, He did something even more dramatic...

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it "a den of robbers".'

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him,

*for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.
When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.
Mark 11:15-19 (NIV UK)*

Jesus saw the way that pilgrims, worshipers, and especially those who were poor, were being exploited by the money changers and the dove-sellers. What was supposed to be a sacred space had become a 'den of robbers' and He was angry about it.

Overturning the tables and driving those who were buying and selling out of the temple courts wasn't an impulsive, spur-of-the-moment thing. Jesus had visited the temple and 'looked around at everything' (Mark 11:11) the previous evening, so He knew exactly what He was doing.

Ask

Where is the sacred space in my life? Perhaps it's a place or time that I have set aside to pray and be with God? Perhaps it's a particular spiritual practice or discipling relationship?

Have I allowed other things to occupy that sacred space? I take a few moments to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Like the temple in today's Bible passage, the Church is vulnerable to losing its way and becoming corrupt, sometimes in subtle ways, sometimes in more obvious ways.

Lord Jesus, I ask You to give strength to those who are overturning the tables that need overturning, to those who are driving out what shouldn't be there. Cleanse and restore Your Church, Lord.

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.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it "a den of robbers".'

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Mark 11:15-19 (NIV UK)

Jesus was quoting the prophet Isaiah when He said, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations' (Isaiah 56:7, NIV UK). And yet that 'house', the temple, had a court system which was designed to keep different groups of people apart and, in particular, to keep foreigners out. Gentiles,

for example, were allowed into an outer court but no further (on pain of death). I wonder if part of Jesus' anger was about the exclusiveness of this system - maybe He wanted to remind them that His Father loves and welcomes all nations, all people.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, as frustrated as I am with the Church sometimes, I am a part of this broken, beautiful body of people, and You invite me to give my best alongside everyone else. Together, as Your beloved bride, help us to offer all that we are and all that we have to 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 2 Chronicles:

...if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy - a place where my name will be honored forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart.

2 Chronicles 7:14-16 (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.

September 02 2022 (click for audio)

Have Faith In God

Today is Friday the 2nd of September, and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and listening for His call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my story. Help me know You more clearly, love You more dearly and follow You more nearly, each and every day.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Lord, through all the generations
you have been our home!
Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end, you are God.*

Psalm 90:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus used a fruitless fig-tree to teach the disciples about the fruitlessness of the temple. Today I'm reflecting on what happened when Jesus and the disciples passed that same fig tree a few days later...

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig-tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, look! The fig-tree you cursed has withered!' 'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.'

Mark 11:20-25 (NIV UK)

Jesus' disciples would have understood that uprooting or removing mountains meant removing difficulties - it was a common phrase at that time. But Jesus almost certainly had a particular mountain in mind when He said these words. According to theologian, Tom Wright; 'Saying to this mountain that it should be "lifted up and thrown into the sea", when you are standing right beside the Temple

mountain, was bound to be another coded warning about what would happen to the Temple.*

* Tom Wright, *Matthew For Everyone Part 2*(London: SPCK, 2002), p. 72-73.

Ask

What particular mountain am I facing right now? What difficulty am I struggling to overcome?

Lord Jesus, I don't have much faith in my own faith - it isn't particularly impressive. But You invite me to 'have faith in God', and I do have faith in You. Please give me extra strength and faith to overcome today.

Pause and pray

Sadly, people have used these verses to justify 'naming and claiming' all sorts of things in prayer, encouraging me to believe that I will get the answers and the changes I seek as long as I have enough faith. I pray for someone - maybe someone I know - who has been deeply hurt because they were told that if they only had more faith then 'this' would have happened, or 'that' wouldn't have happened.

Loving Father, draw close to them and comfort them, especially where they feel like they were 'not enough'. Reassure them with Your love for them and heal them.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig-tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, look! The fig-tree you cursed has withered!'

'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.'

Mark 11:20-25 (NIV UK)

I noticed that what Jesus says about the connection between prayer and forgiveness here is similar to what He teaches in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Bible commentator, William Barclay, makes the connection crystal clear when he writes, 'The prayer of a bitter [person] cannot penetrate the wall of [their] own bitterness.'**

** William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark*, (Edinburgh, Saint Andrews Press: 1975), p. 277.

Is there someone that I feel bitter towards? Is there someone I need to forgive? I take a few moments to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I use a prayer written by Martin Luther as my own today...

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you.***

*** Martin Luther, cited in Tony Castle, *The Hodder Book of Christian Prayers*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), p. 148.

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 that:

...it is by grace [I] have been saved, through faith – and this is not from [myself], it is the gift of God – not by works, so that [I cannot] boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9 (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.

September 03 2022 (click for audio)

God Likes Me

Today is Saturday the 3rd of September, and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and listening for His call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, I fix my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my story. Help me know You more clearly, love You more dearly and follow You more nearly, each and every day.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's authority over all things, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 115...

*Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
but to your name goes all the glory
for your unfailing love and faithfulness.*

Why let the nations say,

“Where is their God?”

Our God is in the heavens,

and he does as he wishes.

Psalm 115:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus and His disciples returned to Jerusalem. Today I'm reflecting on what the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders said when they approached Jesus in the temple courts...

‘By what authority are you doing these things?’ they asked. ‘And who gave you authority to do this?’

Jesus replied, ‘I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism – was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!’

They discussed it among themselves and said, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” he will ask, “Then why didn’t you believe him?” But if we say, “Of human origin” . . .’ (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

So they answered Jesus, ‘We don’t know.’

Jesus said, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.’

Mark 11:28-33 (NIV UK)

Following Jesus' efforts to clear out the temple, the religious leaders were determined to arrest and kill Him, and so they tried to trap Him. 'Who do you think you are?' they asked, 'By whose authority do you do what you do?' If Jesus had said 'my own', they would have had Him arrested as a madman, and if He'd said, 'by God's', they would have had Him arrested for blasphemy.

Jesus answered their question with a question of His own, but His opponents couldn't answer it. Instead of Jesus being trapped, they found themselves trapped in their fear of how the people saw them.

Ask

In what ways am I influenced by what others think about me? In what ways does it affect what I say and do?

I take a few moments to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Today, I pray for Christian leaders that I know.

Father God, thank You for calling these women and men to serve You. May they be free from fear of what others think of them. May they fear You and follow You wholeheartedly instead. I ask You to encourage each of them in a special way today

Pause and pray

Yield

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

'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you authority to do this?'

Jesus replied, 'I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism – was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!'

They discussed it among themselves and said, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin" . . .' (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.'

Jesus said, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.'

Mark 11:28-33 (NIV UK)

The religious leaders refused to face up to the truth of who Jesus was because they were afraid of the cost of doing so.

Facing up to the truth may mean admitting that I am wrong, which can be embarrassing and humiliating. It may also affect the way that other people see me and relate to me. Ultimately though, facing up to the truth always brings freedom (John 8:32, NIV UK).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father God, as You know, I like people to like me. And sometimes this desire to be liked means that I say things and do things simply to please others. Don't let me fall into that trap. I yield instead to the liberating truth that You already like me... and that's enough.

Yielding Promise

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

...if the Son sets [me] free, [I] will be free indeed.

John 8:36 (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.

September 04 2022 (click for audio)

Mission Sabbath, Mark's Gospel

Today is Sunday the 4th of September, and we are taking a break from our usual rhythms to pray a special Sabbath prayer. 'Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath,' writes Rabbi Abraham Heschel, 'we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul.*

* Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*(New York: FSG Classics, 2005) p. 1.

Prayer of Approach

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

Pause and pray

I've been learning from the life of Jesus again this week, and reflecting on the invitation to follow Him, to join in with His mission to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Today, however, I stop all my striving and I make space for the Lord to preach the gospel to me, to come and save me. Sunday is a day to be born again – again! And so I take time now to get right with God, to repent of my sins, to give thanks for the cross, and to receive the Spirit once more.

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*
Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

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

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

September 05 2022 (click for audio)

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Today is Monday the 5t of September, feast of the missionary nun, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who died on this day in 1997. 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 Mother Teresa, a tireless hero of justice and 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

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's justice for the oppressed today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 12...

*The LORD [says], "I have seen violence done to the helpless,
and I have heard the groans of the poor.*

*Now I will rise up to rescue them,
as they have longed for me to do." ...*

*Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed,
preserving them forever...*

Psalm 12:5,7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Mother Teresa was the founder of the Order of the Missionaries of Charity, a worldwide mission dedicated to worshiping Jesus by serving the poorest of the poor. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work 'bringing help to suffering humanity'.

Born to Albanian parents in Skopje, now capital of North Macedonia, aged 18 she traveled to Ireland to become a nun, subsequently teaching in India for 17 years. In 1946 Mother Teresa experienced a 'call within a call' to work with the destitute in the slums of Kolkata. The religious order she founded established a hospice, centers for the blind, the aged and disabled, as well as a leper colony.

By the time of her death in 1997, the Missionaries of Charity numbered more than 4,000 — as well as thousands more lay volunteers — with 610 foundations in 123 countries around the world.

‘There is a terrible hunger for love,’ Mother Teresa once said. ‘We all experience that in our lives – the pain, the loneliness. We must have the courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them.’ She added, ‘Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your own weakness.’*

*Biographical information and quotations from <https://www.biography.com/religious-figure/mother-teresa> (Accessed 09.06.22)

Working for years in quiet obscurity, Mother Teresa’s work nevertheless became widely known and admired. Though acknowledged as a saint, she could be controversial, and she had her critics. She wasn’t perfect, but she never gave up loving and serving the poor.

Ask

Lord, may I - like Your friend Teresa - have an open ear to hear Your call, and the courage to follow You wherever You send me.

Pause and pray

Lord, at a time when prices are rising and life seems more uncertain than ever, I pray for charities and organizations, in my own country and around the world, working with people who are struggling to feed themselves and their children, struggling with debt, and anxious for the future.

Pause and pray

Yield

Mother Teresa always appeared cheerful and deeply committed to God in her work, but for almost 50 years – right until the end of her life – she experienced a long ‘dark night of the soul’. Writing in her diary in 1958 she said:

*My smile is a great cloak that hides a multitude of pains... [People] think that my faith, my hope and my love are overflowing, and that my intimacy with God and union with his will fills my heart. If only they knew.***

**Bruce Johnston, ‘Mother Teresa’s Diary Reveals Her Crisis of Faith’, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 2002.

Is there a gap between how I am perceived publicly and how I truly feel privately in my relationship with God? How am I really? Do I dare to be as honest about this in prayer as Mother Teresa was in her diary? ***

***To explore more about the ‘dark night of the soul’ see Pete Greig’s Book, *God on Mute*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2020), Ch. 11.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield myself to Your purpose and Your path. May I live and walk in faithfulness to Your call regardless of my comfort or my feelings.

Yielding Promise

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

*'Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.'*
Hebrews 13:5 (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.

September 06 2022 (click for audio)

The Vineyard

Today is Tuesday the 6th of September, and for the rest of this week we will be focusing our prayers on the provocative words spoken by Jesus during His final days, after He had cleansed the temple and before He died on the cross.

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

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the story of God today, joining with the ancient praise of all God’s people in the words of Psalm 78...

*I will speak to you in a parable.
I will teach you hidden lessons from our past—
 stories we have heard and known,
 stories our ancestors handed down to us.
We will not hide these truths from our children;
 we will tell the next generation
about the glorious deeds of the LORD,
 about his power and his mighty wonders.*
Psalm 78:2-4 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, as I reflect on the parable of the vineyard, I imagine the expression on Jesus’ face as He tells it to the crowd:

Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall round it, dug a pit for the wine press and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away

empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, "They will respect my son."

Mark 12:1-6 (NIV UK)

I imagine an awkward silence at the end of this story. Perhaps when Jesus says that line about the sending of a son who the master loves, He pauses, letting His words hang, surveying the crowd. And then when He says, surely 'They will respect my son' I imagine Him eyeballing them with a deep sadness, sensing what is to come. In some of the faces I see shame, in others confusion, and others seem incensed by the implication of His words.

Ask

One of the most insidious enemies to the presence of God in my life is a sense of entitlement. It's not just that I want my life for myself; it's that I feel I deserve it, and this makes me indignant when anyone reminds me that my stuff, my time, my money, my life, is in fact a gift and not a right. I am not my own. Is there anything I need to surrender to the Master today? Using the childhood prayer of the prophet Samuel, I respond:

'Speak, for your servant is listening.' (1 Samuel 3:10)

Pause and pray

Remembering how the Master did indeed send His own dearly loved Son (John 3:16), and how we rejected Him then and reject Him now, I pray for someone I know who has not yet recognized and received Jesus as Lord in their life.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall round it, dug a pit for the wine press and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, "They will respect my son."

Mark 12:1-6 (NIV UK)

This is a story about a vineyard at harvest time. What season of life am I in right now? Is it time to break up the fallow ground? Or to sow new seed? To prune dead branches? Or to harvest the ripened fruit?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I relinquish my sense of entitlement to my own life. You are Lord and I am not. You are welcome in my life. Do what You want. Take what You want. I only ask that You would make me fruitful for the glory of Your name. Amen

Yielding Promise

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

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

2 Corinthians 9:10 (NIVUK)

Closing Prayer

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

being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,

being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost,

proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

September 07 2022 (click for audio)

The Cornerstone

Today is Wednesday the 7th of September, and this week we are focusing our prayers on the provocative words spoken by Jesus during His final days, after He had cleansed the temple and before He died on the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

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

*This is the day the LORD has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Psalm 118:22-24 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the concluding part of Jesus' parable of the vineyard. The tenants have rejected or killed every servant the owner has sent, and now he sends his dearly loved son.

*'But the tenants said to one another, "This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 'What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:
"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"?'
Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the*

crowd; so they left him and went away.

Mark 12:7-12 (NIV UK)

Jesus is a threat to the tightly controlled religious system of Jerusalem. French sociologist and theologian, Jacques Ellul, writes that Jerusalem is 'the city seeking to combat God, to destroy his action. But all she does by this is to continue accomplishing God's will.' He adds, 'Jerusalem's crime – the crucifixion – is what ensures her saving worth... Each one crucifies Jesus by his sins, and by that crucifixion each one receives pardon.'*

*Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) p.137.

Ask

Rather than asking anything for myself, today, I take the words of the gospel hymn-writer Charles Gabriel, to exclaim:

*I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.
How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!***

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray today for a renewed sense of wonder in Your church. Would You inspire new songs, and soften hard hearts to worship as You deserve

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 tenants said to one another, "This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 'What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the

crowd; so they left him and went away.

Mark 12:7-12 (NIV UK)

The tenants imagine that it is the owner's son – and Jesus is clearly speaking about Himself – who is robbing them of the chance of an inheritance. 'Let's kill him', they say, 'and the inheritance will be ours.' But they are wrong. Our inheritance is in Christ. It is not something we fight for – we receive it by grace. By welcoming the Son to His own vineyard we, who were once mere servants, are adopted into His family, we become His brothers and sisters, we become heirs (Romans 8:15-17).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Again, I take Charles Gabriel's words as my prayer,

*For me it was in the garden,
He prayed: "Not My will, but Thine."
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat drops of blood for mine.
How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!***

**Charles H .Gabriel, 'My Savior's Love' (1905), Redemption Hymnal (London: Elim Publishing House, 1951) No.176.

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 Father ... has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:12-14 (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.

September 08 2022 (click for audio)

God And Caesar

Today is Thursday the 8th of September, and this week we are focusing our prayers on the provocative words spoken by Jesus during His final days, after He had cleansed the temple and before He died on the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to put my hope in the Lord today, rejoicing with all God's people in the words of Psalm 25...

*Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.*

Psalm 25:4-5 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on one of the most extraordinary answers Jesus ever gave to His critics.

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?'

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. 'Why are you trying to trap me?' he asked. 'Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' They brought the coin, and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?'

'Caesar's,' they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'

And they were amazed at him.

Mark 12:13-17 (NIV UK)

Underneath their flattery, these delegates of the Jewish religious authorities are merely trying to force Jesus to side with a particular political party. But He refuses to reduce His message to the size of their little boxes. Instead he points to the one who is King of kings, and appeals to human hearts to worship Him. Am I in danger of confusing my own political and cultural preferences with the greater purposes of God?

Ask

The sixteenth century English philosopher, Sir Francis Bacon, who was also Chancellor of the Exchequer, observed that 'If money be not thy servant, it will be thy master. The covetous man cannot,' he said, 'so properly be said to possess wealth, as that may be said to possess him.' In other words, if there is anything in my life which I cannot relinquish - my house, my career, my car - I am not free. Instead of owning that object, it has somehow come to own me.

What might it mean today for me to give back to God all that belongs to him?

Pause and pray

King Jesus, I pray for Christians living under oppressive regimes where pledging allegiance to Your name endangers their freedom or even their lives. Renew in them the courage of their convictions, the confidence that comes from knowing they are not alone, and the joy of their salvation.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine the fake smiles on the Pharisees' faces as they compliment Jesus, and the way they scurry around to find him a coin, and then the sound of laughter from the crowd when he outwits them so deftly...

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?'

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. 'Why are you trying to trap me?' he asked. 'Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' They brought the coin, and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?'

'Caesar's,' they replied.

Then Jesus said to them, 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'
And they were amazed at him.

Mark 12:13-17 (NIV UK)

Having come to catch Jesus out, we're told that the Pharisees and Herodians leave 'amazed at him'. They are amazed not by His miracles, in this instance, but by His words. I ask the Holy Spirit who

inspired Jesus on that day, to give me a little of His wisdom to speak the right words in difficult situations today, and perhaps even to leave cynical people amazed by Jesus.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I offer myself to You again today as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). All that I have I give back to You. May the things I do and the words I say help people to see how amazing You really are.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me promises to help me think clearly, speak sensibly, and make good decisions:

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.

September 09 2022 (click for audio)

Marriage And Resurrection

Today is Friday the 9th of September, and this week we've been focusing our prayers on the provocative words spoken by Jesus during His final days, after He had cleansed the temple and before He died on the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice.

My body rests in safety.

*For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.*

*You will show me the way of life,
granting me the joy of your presence
and the pleasures of living with you forever.*

Psalm 16:9-11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today and tomorrow I am going to be reflecting on an extraordinary exchange between some Sadducees and Jesus. Today I'll think about the question they posed and then tomorrow I'll explore the way Jesus responded.

Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 'Teacher,' they said, 'Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection whose wife will she

be, since the seven were married to her?

Mark 12:18-23 (NIV UK)

Tomorrow we will learn from the way Jesus handles this question, but today I consider its context. We live in an extraordinarily cynical culture; an attitude that the Canadian author Douglas Coupland compares to battery acid: 'It just wrecks everything,' he says.* The tone of this question from the Sadducees is essentially cynical: mocking those who believe in life after death, whilst presenting themselves as both sensible and sophisticated; addressing Jesus as 'Teacher' whilst attempting to make a fool out of Him. It's easy to imagine the sneer on their faces as they speak.

*Douglas Coupland in an interview with Steve Raby for Religion News, January 1, 2000.

Ask

Are there any areas in my life where disappointment is making me jaded and cynical towards certain other people, towards my church, or even towards God? I talk to the Lord about this now.

Pause and pray

I think of someone I know who is full of questions about faith, or a Christian who has been so badly hurt that they've walked away from the Lord. I pray for them now, asking the Lord to unclench their fists and to make them whole.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 'Teacher,' they said, 'Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?'

Mark 12:18-23 (NIV UK)

In the Gospels, Jesus asks 307 questions, is asked 183 questions, and only directly answers three.**

'Oh my soul...' cries T.S. Eliot in his poem 'The Rock', 'Be prepared for him who knows how to ask

*** Thinking of the people I'm likely to meet today I ask myself what questions I could ask that might cut through cynicism and unlock their hearts.

**Martin B. Copenhaver, Jesus is the Question: The 307 Questions Jesus Asked and the 3 He Answered (Abingdon Press, 2014). questions.'

*** T.S. Eliot, 'The Rock' from Complete Poems and Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.155.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Thinking of something that has hurt me, I clench my fists before slowly relaxing my hands and opening my palms in surrender before the Lord.

Help me, Father, to forgive as You have forgiven me. Enable me to accept that I will always live with more questions than answers. Teach me to trust You as I used to, even when I can't understand everything You do.

Yielding Promise

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

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them ... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

1 John 4:16b,18a (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.

September 10 2022 (click for audio)

The God Of The Living

Today is Saturday the 10th of September and throughout this week we've been focusing our prayers on the provocative words spoken by Jesus during His final days, after He had cleansed the temple and before He died on the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's covenant-keeping faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 105...

The Lord our God...

*always stands by his covenant—
the commitment he made to a thousand generations.*

This is the covenant he made with Abraham

and the oath he swore to Isaac.

*He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
and to the people of Israel as a never-ending covenant.*

Psalm 105:7-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on Jesus' reply to a particularly cynical question from the Sadducees about marriage in the afterlife:

Jesus replied, 'Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!'

Mark 12:24-27 (NIV UK)

The Sadducees prided themselves on their knowledge of the Torah – the first five books of the Bible. They rejected belief in an afterlife because these five books have nothing obvious to say about it. But Jesus cuts through their cynicism, chiding: ‘Haven’t you read the Bible?’ and I imagine them spluttering with indignation. He then uses one of the greatest stories of their hero Moses, drawn from the heart of the Torah, to demonstrate that belief in life eternal is indeed there, even within the text of Genesis.

Ask

Some people think that a Christian posture must invariably be polite; avoiding conflict at all costs. But in this story, it’s notable that Jesus is not ‘nice’. He stands up to the Sadducees quite forcefully. Thinking of an area of my life in which I may need to be less compliant, more defiant, I ask the Lord to help me be clearer and more assertive, ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Eph. 4:15).

Pause and pray

I pray now for someone known to me who is dying or newly bereaved, asking that the hope of life eternal will bring comfort to them today.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, what expression do I see on Jesus’ face as He speaks?

Jesus replied, ‘Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!’

Mark 12:24-27 (NIV UK)

At the burning bush God reveals himself to Moses as ‘I Am’ - the eternal God of the present tense. Many people today try to find God in the past - in dead religious traditions, or in the history of revivals, or in their own previous experiences - but He is no longer there. Others try to find God in the future - continually on the brink of a breakthrough, perpetually praying and prophesying about something so much better than the moment they are in. But God can only ever be encountered here and now, in the present moment. It never gets more real than now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father, thank You for setting ‘eternity in the human heart’ (Eccl. 3:11). I recognize Your presence here with me now, in this place and moment in time. Help me to be radically present to those I meet today.

Enable me to be patient, unhurried and interruptible. Make me more aware of Your presence in and through all things.

Yielding Promise

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

'Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'

Matthew 28:20; Joshua 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.

September 11 2022 (click for audio)

Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 11th of September, a day of rest for billions of Christians on which we pause our normal rhythms to pray a special Sabbath prayer.

Do not let Sunday be taken from you,' said Albert Schweitzer, the great missionary and Nobel Laureate. 'If your soul has no Sunday, it becomes an orphan.'

Father, help me today to relax and rest as You rested, honoring Your creation with my recreation, expressing my trust through rest and, in all I do, saying with You: 'It is good, it is good, it is good.'

Pause and pray

It's an astounding thought that some two billion people will gather today to worship Jesus from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets (Psalm 113:3). We are the largest, most-diverse community on earth, an ancient, global, revolutionary movement conspiring 'to proclaim good news to the poor... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives... to comfort all who mourn' (ISAIAH 61: 1-2)

Father, thank You that Your family is gathering around the world today. Please speak powerfully, that 'many will see and fear... and put their trust in [You].' (Psalm 40:3 NIV UK)

Jesus, I pray today for pastors and priests leading Your people and preaching Your gospel. May they follow in Your footsteps, loving sacrificially, preaching boldly and laying down their lives for the flock.

Holy Spirit, revive us today we pray. Surprise us with Your power and Your presence as we meet. Heal the sick, speak prophetically, bind up broken hearts, convict our sins, pour out Your gifts, and renew in us an all-consuming passion for Jesus.

Pause and pray

I take a moment now to earth these big prayers quite specifically in my own local community, naming people I know who particularly need an encounter with Jesus today.

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

September 12 2022 (click for audio)

The Way Of Love

Today is Monday the 12th of September, and this week we are continuing to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, and listening for His call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of Your life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them sing joyful praises forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that all who love your name may be filled with joy.
For you bless the godly, O LORD;
you surround them with your shield of love.
Psalm 5:11-12 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus has been debating with the religious leaders, answering questions about paying taxes and marriage. Today, I'm reflecting on His response to what seems like a really simple question...

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.'

Mark 12:28-31 (NIV UK)

Out of the 613 laws which, according to Jewish tradition, are written in the Old Testament, Jesus makes His priorities clear. These two laws, to love God and love your neighbor, are found in different parts of the Torah, but this intentional connection demonstrates what needs to come first: love.

Ask

Am I fully focused on loving God with all my heart, soul and strength, or is something else getting in the way? I pause to talk to God about this now.

Pause and pray

Who is the neighbor I am called to love today? I take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit to highlight someone I can share God's love with practically, through my words and actions.

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 the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.'

Mark 12:28-31 (NIV UK)

Although Jesus was asked to name the single, most important commandment, He actually chose two. My faith cannot just be private prayer and devotion. I'm also called to share the way of love with those around me.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I'm aware that what I identify as the important thing isn't always the most important thing. Help me to walk in step with You today.

Yielding Promise

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

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

September 13 2022 (click for audio)

The Way Of The Kingdom

Today is Tuesday the 13th of September, and this week we are exploring the teachings of Jesus recorded in Mark's Gospel.

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

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of Your life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

Psalm 103:20-22 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm continuing to reflect on a conversation between Jesus and a teacher of the law. Jesus has answered a question about the most important commandment and now His questioner responds...

'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the

*kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.
Mark 12:32-34 (NIV UK)*

In the temple, the very place where burnt offerings and sacrifices were offered, Jesus explains that His way – His Kingdom – is about much more than attaining personal holiness. Having a relationship with God was never meant to be transactional – it was meant to be transformational.

Ask

Is there an area of my faith where - if I'm honest - I'm just doing what's 'required', and simply going through the motions?

God, I want to deepen my relationship with You. I want to love You more.

Pause and pray

I think of my church community. Are we a little too focused on our own 'burnt offerings and sacrifices' - our activities and traditions - and not focused enough on simply loving God and loving our neighbors.

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...

'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Mark 12:32-34 (NIV UK)

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

I'm struck that this conversation silenced those who had been trying to catch Jesus out (Mark 12:13). Their questions had been complex and detailed, but Jesus made it clear: having the right answers to difficult questions isn't the way to enter the Kingdom of God? In fact, it begins with asking the right questions.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, sometimes I make faith self-focused and complex, but in fact it's beautifully simple. Show me how to put love first.

Yielding Promise

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

Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it—because it does.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (MSG)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

September 14 2022 (click for audio)

The Way Of The Messiah

Today is Wednesday the 14th of September, and this week we are journeying through Mark's Gospel and exploring the teaching of Jesus.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of Your life.

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 110...

*The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet."
The LORD will extend your powerful kingdom from Jerusalem;
you will rule over your enemies.
When you go to war,
your people will serve you willingly.
You are arrayed in holy garments,
and your strength will be renewed each day like the morning dew.
Psalm 110:1-3 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I am reflecting on what appears to be a confusing question from Jesus...

*While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:
"The Lord said to my Lord:
'Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.'"
David himself calls him "Lord". How then can he be his son?'*

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Mark 12:35-37 (NIV UK)

Although it sounds like Jesus is questioning whether the Messiah is from the family of David, He's not. He's pointing out that the Messiah is more than simply a son of David.

Jesus quotes from Psalm 110 - written by David - that describes the Messiah as 'My Lord', sitting at the right hand of God. 'My Lord' isn't a term that fathers use to describe their sons.

The Messiah is so much more than David's son; even David will call Him 'Lord'.

Ask

Jesus is the Lord. But what does it mean for me to acknowledge Jesus as my Lord, today?

Pause and pray

I think of someone I know who doesn't yet know Jesus as Lord of their life.

I name them before You today, Jesus. Reveal who You are.

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...

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

"The Lord said to my Lord:

*'Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.'*

David himself calls him "Lord". How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Mark 12:35-37 (NIV UK)

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

I'm struck by the eagerness and anticipation of the crowd as they listen. It challenges me to foster a similar attitude of delight when I'm in the presence of Jesus.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, You're not just a good teacher or kind friend, but Lord of my life. I yield to You again 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 Revelation:

They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.
Revelation 17:14 (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.

September 15 2022 (click for audio)

The Way Of Authenticity

Today is Thursday the 15th of September, and we are continuing to explore the teaching of Jesus in the book of Mark and listening for His call to 'follow me'.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of Your life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Sing praises to God and to his name!
Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds.
His name is the LORD—
rejoice in his presence!
Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—
this is God, whose dwelling is holy.
God places the lonely in families;
he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.
But he makes the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
Psalm 68:4-6 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I am continuing to reflect on Jesus' teaching in the temple courts. Some of the things He said were stark and surprising!

As he taught, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the market-places, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.'

Mark 12:38-40 (NIV UK)

These words of Jesus feel as current and counter-cultural now as when they were first spoken; perhaps even more so. I am called by God to live an authentic and generous life, not one that is full of pride or earthly status.

Ask

Whether I'm a prominent leader or not, it's tempting to seek the attention and approval of other people, instead of focusing my attention on God. Where am I too focused on what other people think of me? I take a moment to talk with God about this now.

Pause and pray

Loving God, I pray for Christian leaders I know. Help them to resist the temptation to build their own reputation instead of building Your kingdom. Give them wisdom and help them to follow You with integrity.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

As he taught, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the market-places, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.'

Mark 12:38-40 (NIV UK)

There's a strong and consistent theme in Jesus' teaching in the temple courts. The most important laws of loving God and others (Mark 12:29-31) are not being practiced by the very people who are experts in them.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, You honor those who are humble, and You champion those in need. Today, I let go of my pride and I focus my attention on Your way.

Yielding Promise

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

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

September 16 2022 (click for audio)

The Way Of Generosity

Today is Friday the 16th of September, and this is the final day of our current series exploring the teachings of Jesus in Mark's gospel.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, light of the world, as I follow You today would You illuminate the darkness within me and around me. Show me Your presence and Your path as I welcome the light of Your life.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives.
Though they stumble, they will never fall,
for the LORD holds them by the hand.
Once I was young, and now I am old.
Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned
or their children begging for bread.
The godly always give generous loans to others,
and their children are a blessing.*

Psalm 37:23-26 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I join Jesus and His disciples in the temple once again. On this occasion, Jesus observes first, and then teaches...

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.'

Mark 12:41-44 (NIV UK)

Typically, the temple containers for the offering were made of metal, which meant that it was easy for anyone nearby to distinguish between offerings that were large and noisy, and those that were small and quiet. But Jesus points out (as He often did) that external actions don't always have the same eternal significance.

Ask

I sometimes judge other people's actions and contributions without knowing anything about their circumstances.

God, forgive me. Help me to be gracious and generous towards other people, to always believe the best.

Pause and pray

Sadly, the image of a 'poor widow' is a familiar one. Rising inflation rates all over the world mean that many individuals, families and communities have little money to live on.

Loving God, I pray for leaders and governments, that they will acknowledge the needs of those who are poor and respond with generosity. Give them wisdom as they seek solutions to the rising costs many are facing.

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 sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on'

Mark 12:41-44 (NIV UK)

For the widow, offering all she had meant trusting in God's provision rather than relying on her own strength. True generosity always requires faith and sacrifice.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I don't want to trust in my money more than I trust You. So today I entrust all that I have to You. Whether I have a lot or a little, I offer it all to You, to do as You will, and I choose to put my trust 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 Proverbs:

*Those who trust in their riches will fall,
but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*
Proverbs 11:28 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

September 17 2022 (click for audio)

Hildegard Of Bingen: Hero Of Creativity

Today is Saturday the 17th of September, feast of the visionary abbess, writer and composer, Hildegard of Bingen. 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 extraordinary example of Hildegard, a radical hero of creativity.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

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 16...

*I said to the LORD, "You are my Master!
Every good thing I have comes from you."...
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 16:2,7-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth and youngest child in her family. At just eight years old, she was sent to live at a Benedictine monastery with a holy woman named Jutta, who was the abbess. When Jutta died, Hildegard took her place.

Hildegard had experienced visions since she was a child but kept them to herself and was hesitant to share them. However, when she was in her early 40s, she received a vision from God saying:

'Say and write what you see and hear. But since you are timid in speaking, and simple in expounding, and untaught in writing, speak and write these things not by a human mouth, and not by the understanding of human invention, and not by the requirements of human composition, but as you see and hear them on high in the heavenly places in the wonders of

*God.'**

*Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. Columba Hart, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 59.

Hildegard obeyed and began to write the visions down. In 1146, she wrote to Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, seeking his advice and Bernard replied, eagerly encouraging her to pursue her gift. During the synod of Trier, supporters of Hildegard appealed to Pope Eugenius III on her behalf, and Bernard also spoke in her favor. As a result, the Pope approved the publication of her writings.

Over the next few years, with papal permission, Hildegard became a prolific writer. She wrote volumes of her visionary experiences, offering a poetic, image-rich description of God and God's relationship with humanity:

*'God's throne is, indeed, the divine eternity in which God alone abides, and all living creatures are, so to speak, sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance, and these sparks emerge from God like the rays of the sun.'***

**Hildegard of Bingen, *Vision Four:11*, Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with letters and Songs, ed. Matthew Fox, (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1987), eBook.

Ask

Is God challenging me to do something? I may not have received a vision, but perhaps I'm being prompted, or encouraged by someone I trust, or feeling a call to step into something bold or new. I pause to talk to God about this now and listen for what God might want to say to me.

Pause and pray

I think of someone who has encouraged me in my faith journey, like Bernard of Clairvaux did for Hildegard. I pause to give thanks and pray for them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

In addition to her visionary works, Hildegard wrote two volumes on natural medicine, over 400 letters, and was the composer of 77 pieces of music, including the *Canticles of Ecstasy* which were popularized in the 1990s and have over 2 million views on YouTube!***

***To listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei88J4lERbk>

For the rest of her life, Hildegard remained committed to God's call. In her sixties she traveled throughout Germany, sharing her visions and religious insights, something highly unusual and remarkable for a woman in this time.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Loving God, like Hildegard, I feel timid in speaking sometimes - I keep quiet when perhaps I should raise my voice. I feel simple in expounding too - I don't understand things as deeply as I'd like. And I

feel untaught in writing - I struggle to express the things I feel. But I yield all of this to You, and I draw inspiration from Hildegard. Help me to serve You wholeheartedly, for the rest of my life.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Psalm 32...

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.

September 18 2022 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer

It's Sunday the 18th of September, and today we pause our normal rhythm to pray a special Sabbath prayer. This week I've been exploring the teachings of Jesus, and learning about the life and devotion of Hildegard of Bingen. And so, as I settle into this time of prayer, 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 in 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

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

September 19 2022 (click for audio)

El Shaddai – the Almighty

Today is Monday the 19th of September, an unusual day on which London hosts the biggest single gathering of world leaders in living memory at the funeral of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

This is not just a moment for mourning the loss of one of the world's longest-serving and most famous Christian leaders; it is also arguably the greatest evangelistic opportunity in a generation because thousands have gathered at Westminster Abbey, millions in churches and community centers throughout the Commonwealth, and potentially billions online, all participating in a Christian service of prayer and worship at which the gospel will be preached sensitively by Archbishop Justin Welby.

And so, before Jill Weber shares today's devotional and we enter into our usual rhythm of prayer, let's pause to pray for Justin Welby, and for the family of Queen Elizabeth II, and for so many world leaders participating together today in this historic moment focused on Jesus Christ.

Pause and pray

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's might today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 24...

Open up, ancient gates!

Open up, ancient doors,

and let the King of glory enter.

Who is the King of glory?

The LORD, strong and mighty;

the LORD, invincible in battle.

Open up, ancient gates!

Open up, ancient doors,

and let the King of glory enter.

Who is the King of glory?

The Lord of Heaven's Armies—

he is the King of glory.

Psalm 24:7-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Throughout the Scriptures we find nine hundred and fifty names and descriptions of God. Sometimes God declares His name, and sometimes He demonstrates it.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'

Abram fell face down, and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be

the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Genesis 17:1-5 (NIV UK)

‘God Almighty’ is the translation of the Hebrew phrase El Shadda. However, there are different interpretations of the word Shaddai. Some scholars say it suggests God’s strength and power. Throughout their friendship, God demonstrates His power to Abram: delivering Abram from his enemies and by giving his barren wife Sarai a son.

Ask

How has God already demonstrated His strength and power in my life? Where do I need God’s strength and power today?

God Almighty, I name this situation before You. Come and be strength in my weakness, power in my powerlessness.

Pause and pray

God Almighty, I call on Your name and appeal to Your nature as I pray today for the weak and the vulnerable. Widows. Orphans. Those who are poor. Would You demonstrate your power on their behalf. And would You strengthen them on the inside by Your Holy Spirit (Eph 3: 16)

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 Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’

Abram fell face down, and God said to him, ‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Genesis 17:1-5 (NIV UK)

Other scholars say that Shaddai comes from the Hebrew word Shad, which means breast. In the Scriptures we see a God who nourishes and nurtures God’s people as a mother would her child. ‘Can a mother forget the baby at her breast’, God says through the prophet Isaiah, ‘and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!’ (Isaiah 49:15,16).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield to God today with the childlike prayer of the Psalmist:

*My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quietened myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.*

Psalm 131:1-2 (NIV UK)

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Hosea 11:

*I [lead you] with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.*

*To [you] I [am] like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I [bend] down to feed [you].*

Hosea 11:4 (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.

September 20 2022 (click for audio)

El Olam – The Everlasting God

Today is Tuesday the 20th of September, and this week we are reflecting on the names of God in the Old Testament. 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, thank You for the many ways that You make Yourself known. As I draw close to You and call You by name today, would You reveal more of Your nature to me. Blessed be Your name.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Lord, through all the generations
you have been our home!
Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end, you are God.*

Psalm 90:1-2 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting some more on the story of Abraham. To settle a dispute with a local king, Abraham made a treaty with him.

After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Genesis 21:32-34 (NIV UK)

Abraham was a nomad whose life was characterized by change. He and his family were transient, traveling from place to place, living in a tent. At this time, he was living as a foreigner in the dusty desert of the Negev. Abraham called on the name of the eternal God, *El Olam*, which is translated as the everlasting God. The God who is, who was, and who is to come (Rev. 1:8). The God who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Ask

Is my life characterized by stability or instability? What changes have I experienced over the last couple of years?

El Olam, everlasting God, You are the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). In the midst of life's fragility and changeability, I cling to Your name and Your unchangeable nature. Would you stabilize my heart, my mind, and my life.

Pause and pray

God today I pray for migrants and refugees, for those whose only constant thing is change. As they wander as Abraham did, looking for home, would You demonstrate Your everlasting love and care for them.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Genesis 21:32-34 (NIV UK)

The Scriptures go on to describe a God of everlasting strength (Isaiah 26:4), everlasting kindness (Isaiah 54:8), everlasting joy (Isaiah 61:7), everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3), everlasting mercy (Psalm 100:5), everlasting righteousness (Psalm 119:142), everlasting light (Isaiah 60:20), and everlasting salvation (Isaiah 45:17).

Everlasting God, choosing one of these attributes, I take a moment to reflect on and rejoice in who You are..

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I yield today with the words of a song by Gary Sadler and Lynn DeShazo:

*We are a moment, You are forever
Lord of the Ages, God before time
We are a vapor, You are eternal
Love everlasting, reigning on high
Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain*

Highest praises, honor and glory

*Be unto Your name**

**Gary Sadler and Lynn DeShazo 'We are a moment, You are forever (Be unto Your Name)', © 1998
Integrity's Hosanna! Music.*

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Jeremiah 31:

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Jeremiah 31:3 (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.

September 21 2022 (click for audio)

Feast Day – Henri Nouwen

Today is Wednesday the 21st of September, and it's the Feast of the Dutch Catholic Priest, Henri Nouwen, who died on this day in 1996. 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, Creativity, Justice, Hospitality, Learning and Mission**. Today, we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Henri Nouwen, a passionate hero of learning and prayer.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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 choose to rejoice today in God's care for me, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 139...

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.

They cannot be numbered!

I can't even count them;

they outnumber the grains of sand!

And when I wake up,

you are still with me!

Psalm 139:17-18 (NIV UK)

Pause and pray

As a child in the Netherlands, Henri Nouwen was educated by Jesuits, and even though he decided he wouldn't be a Jesuit priest because it required too much study, he went on to spend much of his life learning.

When he was ordained at just 25 years old, Henri was drawn to the importance of psychology – despite the fact Church circles at the time thought it undermined Christian faith. He graduated as a psychologist in 1963, before moving to America to study further. This period of learning informed his teaching and writing on pastoral theology, leading him to lecture at Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard universities. He was known and appreciated for teaching on themes of depression, intimacy and love.

Henri focused his often personal, autobiographical writing style on the ‘theology of the heart’, seeking a personal connection with Jesus that shaped everything else. He said in one of his later books:

*‘The knowledge of Jesus’ heart is a knowledge of the heart. And when we live in the world with that knowledge, we cannot do other than bring healing, reconciliation, new life and hope wherever we go.’ **

* Henri Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus, p.27

For Henri, learning about Jesus was more than just head-knowledge. He was focused and passionate about the way human hearts and bodies connect with Jesus in prayer, worship and adoration; the intimacy of a personal relationship, rather than just religious ritual or theological knowledge.

Our love and devotion of Jesus begins with a posture of openness of both heart and body; allowing Jesus to love us, so that we can love Him in return, and then reflect His love to others.

Ask

Sometimes, I am too quick to focus on what Jesus has done for me, or what He can do for me, rather than how He feels about me.

Jesus, help me to know Your heart for me afresh, today.

Pause and pray

Lord, help me to step into the world with a deeper understanding of Your intimate love for me, and for others. God, who is my neighbor? I ask You to give me a name, bring someone specific to mind. How can I demonstrate Your love to them today?

Pause and pray

Yield

Later in his life, Henri devoted himself to caring for those with learning disabilities amongst the L’Arche community in Canada. During this time, he wrote:

*‘God’s presence is often a hidden presence, a presence that needs to be discovered. The loud boisterous noises of the world make us deaf to the soft, gentle and loving voice of God.’ ***

** Henri Nouwen ,In the Name of Jesus, p.69

Henri realized at L’Arche that to encounter God means actively, intentionally and attentively seeking Him, and the intimacy of His presence.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

So today, Lord, I recommit my time, energy and intention to you with a prayer written by Henri Nouwen:

*I so much want to be in control.
I want to be the master of my own destiny.
Still I know that you are saying:
'Let me take you by the hand and lead you.
Accept my love
and trust that where I will bring you,
the deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled.'
Lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love.
Amen. ****

*** <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/a-prayer/>

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 Zephaniah that:

*God takes great delight in me;
in his love God will no longer rebuke me,
but will rejoice over me with singing.*

Zephaniah 3:17b, adapted

Closing Prayer

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

September 22 2022 (click for audio)

I AM – God Of Your Fathers

Today is Thursday the 22nd of September, and we are continuing to reflect on the names of God in the Old Testament.

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, thank You for the many ways that You make Yourself known. As I draw close to You and call You by name today, would You reveal more of Your nature to me. Blessed be Your name.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts;
let them proclaim your power.*

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

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

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

Psalm 145:4-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Moses encountered the presence of God in the midst of a burning bush and was invited to join God on mission. However, Moses had a burning question: Who are you?

Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."

God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you."

*'This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me*

from generation to generation.'

Exodus 3:13-15 (NIV UK)

It's easy to forget that Moses met God before the Bible was written. All Moses had was a handful of stories passed from one generation to the next. Stories about his ancestors, and a mysterious God who revealed His name and His ways to them.

Ask

God, I thank you for my ancestors, both in my direct family if I have them, but also in the larger family of faith. Abraham. Sarah. Florence Nightingale. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Elizabeth Fry. J.R.R. Tolkien. Mother Teresa. I thank you that I am surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses to the life of faith (Hebrews 12:1). May I know You, love You, and follow You as they did.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for parents today, that You would empower them to live in such a way that their children would clearly see and know the God of their fathers and their mothers.

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.

Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."

God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you."

*'This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.'*

Exodus 3:13-15 (NIV UK)

What legacy do I want to leave behind? What stories do I want to be told to my children (be they natural or spiritual) and my children's children about a God who has revealed His name and His ways to me?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, today I take my place amongst the multitudes who, through the ages, have faithfully loved and obeyed You, bearing witness to Your name and Your nature. I yield myself to Your eternal purposes for my life and for the lives of those I love.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in Isaiah 59:

'As for me, this is my covenant with [you],' says the LORD. 'My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants – from this time on and for ever,' says the LORD.

Isaiah 59:21 (NIV UK)

Lord, even if I don't yet see this promise fulfilled in the lives of my children or my children's children, I hold it before You today with hope in my heart.

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.

September 23 2022 (click for audio)

Jehovah Nissi – The Lord My Banner

Today is Friday the 23rd of September, and we are continuing to reflect on how God reveals His nature and His name in the Old Testament.

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, thank You for the many ways that You make Yourself known. As I draw close to You and call You by name today, would You reveal more of Your nature to me. Blessed be Your name.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's saving power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 60...

*But you have raised a banner for those who fear you—
a rallying point in the face of attack. Interlude
Now rescue your beloved people.
Answer and save us by your power...
With God's help we will do mighty things,
for he will trample down our foes.
Psalm 60:4-5,12 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

In today's story, I find Joshua in the cut and thrust of battle...

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.'

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner.

Exodus 17:10-15 (NIV UK)

In ancient wartime, banners were used to help rally troops to key locations and to identify who each section of soldiers belonged to. In this passage, 'The Lord is my Banner' is translated as Jehovah Nissi. This is the only place in the Bible where God is named specifically in this way, but elsewhere in the Scriptures banners are associated with God's help and salvation.

Ask

What battles am I fighting on the front line of my life today?

God, You know the forces arrayed against me. I call on You, Jehovah Nissi. Would You send Your saving help to me today that I might overcome.

Pause and pray

God, today I pray for those who struggle with their mental health - for those who are engaged in battle for their own personal headspace. Send Your saving help today, silence the voices of their internal foes and strengthen them by Your Spirit. I think of someone I know who is wrestling with their mental health and I pray for them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I imagine the scene in my mind's eye. I hear the clash and the cries of pitched battle. I see the silhouette of Moses and his helpers, high on a hill, arms stretched to heaven.

So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.'

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner.

Exodus 17:10-15 (NIV UK)

Later in the Scriptures, Isaiah spoke of the Messiah, 'In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people... He will set up a banner for the nations' (Isaiah 11:10,12). And in Romans 15:12, the apostle Paul quotes Isaiah's words and applies them to Jesus. Jesus Himself said, 'When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself' (John 12:32).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, from the thick of my own battle, I lift my eyes to You on a hill, Your arms outstretched to save me. Your banner over me is love. I belong to You. With gratitude, I receive Your saving help today.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I am comforted and strengthened by Psalm 37:

*The Lord helps [me] and delivers [me];
he delivers [me] from the wicked and saves [me],
because [I] take refuge in him.*

Psalm 37:40 (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.

September 24 2022 (click for audio)

Jehovah Shalom – the Lord Is Peace

Today is Saturday the 24th September, and this week we've been reflecting on different names and attributes of God in the Old Testament - El Shaddai- God Almighty. El Olam- The everlasting God. Jehovah Nissi- God our banner. 'I AM' - The God of our fathers. Today we reflect on Jehovah Shalom- God our peace.

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, thank You for the many ways that You make Yourself known. As I draw close to You and call You by name today, would You reveal more of Your nature to me. Blessed be Your name.

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

Gideon has been conscripted by the angel of the Lord to save God's people from the hand of their enemies. Unsure who he is talking to, he asks for a sign, and prepares an offering for his mysterious guest.

Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And Gideon did so. Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, 'Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!'

But the LORD said to him, 'Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.'

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Judges 6:19-24 (NIV UK)

The angel of the LORD interrupted Gideon when he was hiding from his enemies, no doubt looking for some peace and quiet. Divine interruption can be unsettling, particularly if, like Gideon, I am finding things a bit overwhelming and I'm in survival mode, just keeping my head down.

Ask

Has God interrupted my life lately, through personal circumstances or through other people?

Jehovah Shalom, if you're the God of Peace, why is it that you interrupt and disturb me? Sometimes it seems more like You're a disturber of the peace than a bringer of comfort. What do you want from me?

Pause and pray

God, I pray for friends I know who, like Gideon, are finding life overwhelming right now. Would you reveal Yourself to them in their struggle, and come and bring both Your disturbance and, ultimately, Your peace.

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.

Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And Gideon did so. Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, 'Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!'

But the LORD said to him, 'Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.'

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Judges 6:19-24 (NIV UK)

At God's invitation, Gideon went from merely seeking survival to experiencing peace - shalom.

Theologian Walter Brueggemann writes:

*'Shalom is a persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity, many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. [Shalom is] the freight of a dream of God that resists all our tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness, and misery.'**

*Walter Brueggemann, Living toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom,(Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1984), p. 15.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jehovah Shalom, I confess my tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness and misery. Today I yield myself to Your joy, to well-being, to love, grace and blessing.

Yielding Promise

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

*The Lord gives strength to his people;
the Lord blesses his people with peace.
Psalm 29:11 (NIV UK)*

Closing Prayer

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

September 25 2022 (click for audio)

Sabbath Prayer

Today is Sunday the 25th September and, as every Sunday, we take a break from our usual rhythm of Pausing, Rejoicing and Reflecting, Asking and Yielding to pray the Bible and embrace a day of rest.

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

*Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant*(Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p. 82.

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

Pause and pray

A prayer of contentment from Psalm 131:

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

Psalm 131:1-3 (NIV UK)

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

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

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

Pause and pray

I dedicate the coming week to Jesus:

Thank You, Father, for loving me with all Your heart, all Your soul and all Your mind.

Inspire me this week to love You more with all of mine.

Thank You, Jesus, for Your faithful and sacrificial friendship.

Help me this week to be a faithful and sacrificial friend like You.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for listening to my many thoughts and words and dreams.

Still my soul this week to listen much more carefully to yours.

Sabbath Blessing

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

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

September 26 2022 (click for audio)

Being A Peacemaker

Today is Monday the 26th of September. This week we are exploring what it looks like to follow Jesus in a fractured and conflicted world. We will be drawing wisdom from the Difference course*, and exploring how the reconciling habits of being curious, being present and re-imagining can help us be a peacemaker.

* See Difference course - difference.rln.global to further explore the themes of this week's Lectio 365

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach me to know Your reconciling way. Enable me to be curious about others' stories. Give me the courage to be present. Inspire me to re-imagine what's possible - finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's love and peace today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 85:

*Show us your unfailing love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.
I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying,
for he speaks peace to his faithful people.*

Psalm 85:7-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

I begin this week asking God to awaken in me the calling to be a peacemaker - reconciled to God and the world around me.

Today's reading is Jesus' first big sermon and it comes with a blessing:

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*
Matthew 5:5-9 (NIV UK)

The founder of Christianity didn't lead an army, or build a kingdom of this world. In His kingdom there are no frontier guards, no barbed wire, no passports. It is a kingdom of love.

Ask

Loving Lord, I rejoice today that we can receive Your kingdom and Your love. May we love others as You first loved us today.

Pause and pray

Lord, in my community where there is fracture rather than flourishing, injustice rather than justice, hurt rather than healing, I ask for Your restoration, reconciliation and transformation. Let Your kingdom come.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

Matthew 5:5-9 (NIV UK)

As one made in the image of God, peacemaking, reconciliation is in my DNA, part of my identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. People will know we are God's children because we show the family likeness. Given peace from God, we build peace.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I am a fractured, forgiven, work in progress, reconciled to You through Jesus. I yield myself to You, inviting You to work in and through my life, that I might become a reconciler.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in John 14:

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.'

John 14:27 (NIV UK)

Closing prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

September 27 2022 (click for audio)

Being Curious

Today is Tuesday the 27th of September. We are looking at how being curious enables us to bridge division and create connection, using the wisdom of the Difference course*.

* See Difference course - difference.rln.global to further explore the themes of this week's Lectio 365

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 enable us and others and '**Y**': **YIELDING** to His will in our lives, come what may.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach me to know Your reconciling way. Enable me to be curious about others' stories. Give me the courage to be present. Inspire me to re-imagine what's possible - finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's majesty today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 8:

*When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?*

Psalm 8:3-4 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on the story of Jesus' meeting in Samaria with the woman at the well, as told in John's gospel, chapter 4:

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

John 4:7-10 (NIV UK)

Jesus' longest conversation in John's Gospel takes place with someone we might not expect. The woman he meets is a Samaritan, considered an enemy by the Jews, or at the very least an opponent. She is marginalized in her own community, she's a woman in a patriarchal society. Yet they both bridge the divide and engage with each other with curiosity.

Ask

God, as I meet people who are different from me, may I be open to seeing Your image in them, to be curious about their story and to seek to bridge divides.

Pause and pray

Lord, you call all peoples to Your kingdom. In a world created with diversity and difference, help us know that we are all your beloved children.

Today, I pray for someone who perhaps is a bit different from me.

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 a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

John 4:7-10 (NIV UK)

This encounter across difference doesn't just transform the life of the woman at the well. Her testimony convinces an entire community of Jesus' identity too. What might be possible in my community if we are open to one another with curiosity and wonder?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I know I can be quick to judge when You are quick to love. Enable me to love and seek to understand others as You love and understand 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 the Gospel of Matthew:

'...surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.'

Matthew 28:20 (NIV UK)

Closing prayer

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

September 28 2022 (click for audio)

Being Present

Today is Wednesday the 28th of September, we are looking at how being present helps us navigate disagreement, using the wisdom of the Difference course*.

* See Difference course - difference.rln.globalto further explore the themes of this week's Lectio 365

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach me to know Your reconciling way. Enable me to be curious about others' stories. Give me the courage to be present. Inspire me to re-imagine what's possible - finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's presence today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 139:

*I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave, you are there.
If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.*

Psalm 139: 7-10(NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on the story of the woman who washes Jesus' feet at the home of Simon the Pharisee. Simon had invited Jesus to dinner and was shocked at the woman's behavior and the behavior of Jesus.

Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown.

'But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.'

Luke 7:44-47 (NIV UK)

In disagreement, do I choose to be present, or do I choose to disengage? Do I seek to impose my own opinions and maintain the hierarchies that benefit me, or do I come in humility, knowing my dependence on God's grace?

Ask

Lord, help me to be present as I encounter people I do not agree with or do not understand, and as I experience feelings I am hesitant to name. Guide me in being bold and humble in these relationships.

Pause and pray

Lord, I think of those I know who are weary of disagreement. May they know Your presence in their pain as You draw them closer to You.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.'

Luke 7:44-47 (NIV UK)

In this story, Jesus champions the woman, affirms her inherent dignity, and creates space for her to be who she is and bring what she has.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your presence with me. Thank you for Your invitation to be who I am and bring what I have. May I extend that to others.

Yielding Promise

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

'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

Exodus 33:14 (NIV UK)

Closing prayer

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

September 29 2022 (click for audio)

Forgiven Forgivers

Today is Thursday the 29th of September, and we are looking at forgiveness and reimagining, drawing on the wisdom of the Differene course*.

* See Difference course - difference.rln.globalto further explore the themes of this week's Lectio 365

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach me to know Your reconciling way. Enable me to be curious about others' stories. Give me the courage to be present. Inspire me to re-imagine what's possible - finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's forgiveness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 51:

*Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.
Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
Psalm 51:1-2 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today, I'm reflecting on the story of Jesus and Peter on the beach after Jesus' resurrection, from John's Gospel:

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'
'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'
Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'
Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'
He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'
Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'
The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you*

know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'

John 21:15-17 (NIV UK)

After Peter denies Jesus three times, Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to affirm his love for Jesus three times. It reminds me that forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or ignoring wrongs but allowing the love of Jesus to change me so that I re-imagine my past and future. The painful process of forgiveness can be a chance for me to grow in deeper intimacy with God.

Ask

Lord, forgive me my many mistakes, and strengthen me to forgive others where I have been hurt and wronged.

Pause and pray

Jesus, I pray for families and households today. In relationships where there is pain, would You pour out compassion and the ability to love and forgive, and to re-imagine a new way of being together.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'

John 21:15-17 (NIV UK)

Jesus' forgiveness of Peter comes with a commissioning.

It reminds me that forgiveness liberates both those who have been hurt, and those who have caused hurt, to play their full role in God's plan.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Father, I receive Your forgiveness, I release the pains of the past, and I yield to Your plan for my life. Come, transform 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 2 Corinthians:

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV UK)*

Closing prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

September 30 2022 (click for audio)

Hope And Reimagining

Today is Friday the 30th of September, and we are thinking about risking hope and reimagining possibilities in the face of challenges, drawing on the wisdom of the Difference course*.

* See Difference course - difference.rln.globalto further explore the themes of this week's Lectio 365

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach me to know Your reconciling way. Enable me to be curious about others' stories. Give me the courage to be present. Inspire me to re-imagine what's possible - finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

Rejoice and Reflect

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

Let all that I am wait quietly before God,

for my hope is in him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,

my fortress where I will not be shaken.

Psalm 62:5-6 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reading the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet in John, chapter 13:

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

John 13:2-7 (NIV UK)

Jesus is present with the disciples, even in the shadow of the cross that awaits him. In extending love to others when it might feel easier to withdraw, Jesus helps us re-imagine a new way which brings

new possibilities. When the world feels overwhelming, we can still choose relationship and connection.

Ask

God, help me love others as generously as You love me. Today, would You expand my imagination to see the possibilities of reconciliation.

Pause and pray

Lord, where relationships have ruptured, may You bring repair. Where actions have damaged, may You bring healing. Where there are dead ends, would You let us re-imagine turning points. With you, we can find hope where we most long to see change.

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 evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'
John 13:2-7 (NIV UK)

Jesus takes the risk that His actions and attitudes won't be understood but He still chooses to embody hope through a simple act of love. God works through simple acts in my life.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, Your ways are higher and wiser. Enable me see things as You see them, love people as You love them, and enter into Your imagination for the world that You are reconciling to yourself.

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:

*See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness*

*and streams in the wasteland.
Isaiah 43:19 (NIV UK)*

Closing prayer

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