

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 and other members of 24/7 Prayer

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

March 2023

March 1	March 2	March 3	March 4
March 5	March 6	March 7	March 8
March 9	March 10	March 11	March 12
March 13	March 14	March 15	March 16
March 17	March 18	March 19	March 20
March 21	March 22	March 23	March 24
March 25	March 26	March 27	March 28
March 29	March 30	March 31	

Audio for Each Day in MP3 Format

[Month of March 2023](#)

March 01 2023 (click for audio)

The Son of Man

Today is Wednesday the 1st of March, and this week we are praying through Jesus' prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

...O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Psalm 8:3-4,9 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I return to Jesus' warning to His disciples. So far, He has prophesied about the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple which took place in AD 70. Now Jesus speaks to His friends about another aspect of what's to come...

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."

Mark 13:24-27 (ESV UK)

In a few sentences of prophetic poetry, full of scriptural hyperlinks, Jesus paints a compelling picture. The stars falling from heaven echo God's judgment of the nations in Isaiah (34:4). The 'Son of Man' is taken directly from Daniel's vision of a person being presented to God and receiving 'authority, glory

and sovereign power' (Dan. 7:14a NIVUK). And the people being gathered from 'the ends of the earth' echo God's promise to make Abraham's descendants a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:3b).

After the warnings of war and destruction Jesus is giving His friends a hope-filled peek into what will happen after His death and resurrection. Jesus is the Son of Man who will ascend to His Father in heaven, receiving all authority and power, accelerating His mission to bring all nations into His kingdom.

Ask

Jesus, Son of Man, I take a moment to pause and worship You today. You are the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. All power and glory are Yours.

Pause and pray

Jesus, I pray for my nation today. Thank You for including us in Your great mission of love. I borrow Your words and pray, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, in my nation as it is in heaven...(adapted from Matt 5:10)

Pause and pray

Yield

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

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."
Mark 13:24-27 (ESV UK)

Today, I follow Jesus Christ, the 'Son of Man', resurrected and reigning in heaven. And incredibly, He has asked me to play a part in this prophecy. I am commissioned to, 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28:18-20). How will I put God's mission into practice today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, if I'm able, I get on my knees and I worship You with the words of Daniel...

You have been given power to rule—all the glory of royalty.

Everyone—race, color, and creed— will serve You.

Your rule will be forever, never ending.

Your kingly rule would never be replaced.

Adapted from Daniel 7:14 (MSG)

Yielding Promise

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

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

Matthew 28:20b (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.

March 02 2023 (click for audio)

Faith in Words

Today is Thursday the 2nd of March, and this week we are continuing our Lent journey, praying through every verse of Mark's Gospel, as we prepare to remember Jesus' crucifixion and celebrate His resurrection.

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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

I lie in the dust;

revive me by your word...

I cling to your laws.

LORD, don't let me be put to shame!

I will pursue your commands,

for you expand my understanding.

Psalm 119:25,31-32 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on Jesus' prophetic warning to His disciples. He has foretold a time of disaster for Jerusalem and described how He'll return to the Father in victory. Now He urges His friends to trust in Him...

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Mark 13:28-31 (ESV UK)

Throughout this chapter Jesus has warned His friends about great suffering to come. It would be understandable if, when prophecy became reality and their world fell apart, they wondered where

God was in it all. Jesus wants the disciples to know that, even when the worst happens, they can depend on His words and act on His instruction.

Ask

What difficulties or challenges am I facing right now?

Holy Spirit, what does God's word say to me in this situation? I turn it into my prayer of trust and put it into action today.

Pause and pray

Who do I know whose world feels as if it's falling apart? Maybe they've lost their job, their home, a relationship, or maybe they're grieving.

Jesus, I name them before You now and I ask You to give me a Bible passage to share with them today.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Mark 13:28-31 (ESV UK)

Just a few chapters earlier, Jesus used a withered fig tree to teach about the power of faith-filled prayer (Mark 11:20-25). I wonder whether the disciples remembered that call to trust and pray when He showed them the fig tree for the second time?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, in every season I want to look for the signs of the times and be persistent in faith-fueled prayer. Sadly, I am often oblivious and inconsistent, but today I choose to pay attention and to pray.

Yielding Promise

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

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Mark 11:24 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

March 03 2023 (click for audio)

The Art of Waiting

Today is Friday the 3rd of March, and this week we are praying through Jesus' prophetic warning in the Gospel of Mark.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's knowledge and power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 147...

[God] heals the brokenhearted
and bandages their wounds.

He counts the stars
and calls them all by name.

How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!
His understanding is beyond comprehension!

Psalm 147:3-5 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus has prophesied events that will utterly change the city of Jerusalem. Now He addresses the first question that was probably on the lips of every disciple... when will all this happen?

"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come."

Mark 13:32-33 (ESV UK)

I would really like the Bible to be a little more specific about dates and times. But New Testament scholar, Tom Wright, reminds me that, though I may be tempted to look for clues and take control of events, I should not reduce 'biblical prophecy to the level of a horoscope'.* God can be trusted. God is ultimately in control.

* Tom Wright, Mark for Everyone (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 187.

Ask

Am I in a holding pattern right now, waiting for a prayer to be answered, or a prophecy to become reality?

Lord, waiting is difficult. I need Your help. Give me patience, persistence, and the strength to keep praying today.

Pause and pray

Commentator R. T. France believes that this passage also anticipates the time of Jesus' return, His second coming.**

**R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., (Grand Rapids, 2002) p501-502

Jesus, as I look around the world, at the climate challenges, the poverty, the injustice, and the inequality we face, I pray for the fullness of Your kingdom to come, and the completeness of Your will to be done.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.”

Mark 13:32-33 (ESV UK)

This passage reminds me of events in the very next chapter of Mark's Gospel. Jesus, 'deeply troubled and distressed' about the suffering and death that lay before Him, asked His disciples to 'keep watch and pray' (Mark 14:33-38, NLT). The disciples, unaware of what was to come, could not stay awake. Jesus was left to wrestle in prayer alone.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I cannot judge the disciples because I am all too like them. My spirit is willing, but my body is weak(adapted from Mark 14:38b).Help me, by Your Spirit, to be alert and on guard, joining You in 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 Isaiah:

My word that goes out from my mouth:

will not return to me empty,
it will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Adapted from Isaiah 55:11 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

March 04 2023 (click for audio)

Be Ready

Today is Saturday the 4th of March, and this week we are preparing for Easter by praying through Mark's account of Jesus' final words and His journey to the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's attentive care, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 121...

*My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth!
He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
Psalm 121:2-4 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on Jesus' command to stay alert and be ready...

"It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Mark 13:34-37 (ESV UK)

'Stay awake'. Jesus' words ring in my ears as I go on to read Mark's account of how Jesus was anointed, betrayed, arrested, and executed. And His words continue to ring in my ears as I live in the light of His resurrection, working out my faith and waiting for Him to come again. Jesus says to me: 'stay awake... stay alert... be ready... because one day I will return.'

Ask

Do I live as if Jesus could return in my lifetime? How would I live differently if I took His command to be ready seriously?

Pause and pray

Lord, show me an area of my life where I am slumbering. Wake me up!

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.

“It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

Mark 13:34-37 (ESV UK)

Theologian Tom Wright notes that, ‘the ongoing command to God’s people in Christ [is] to be faithful to him, not to compromise with the standards and fashions of the present age, but to keep awake, watching... for the day to dawn, in whose light the dim flickering candles of the present age will be needed no more.’*

* Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2004), pp. 187-188.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I am easily distracted by ‘the standards and fashions of this present age’. Teach me to ‘pray without ceasing’ (1 Thess. 5:17, ESV), and to live my life ready to respond to whatever You say and however You move.

Yielding Promise

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

Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

Revelation 22:12 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

March 05 2023 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer - Lent

Today is Sunday the 5th of March, a day of rest on which we interrupt our weekday pattern and return again to a shorter, simpler Sabbath prayer for Lent.

Throughout the past week I've been reflecting on the book of Mark, following Jesus on His way to the cross. Today however, I'm skipping to the end of the Easter story, celebrating the risen Christ who has delivered us from the cruel bondage of sin and death.

The commandment to rest on the Sabbath was given to the children of Israel - a people God delivered from slavery, a life of unrelenting toil.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV UK)

The gift of the Sabbath reminds me that I am free. Or am I?

Author Adele Calhoun challenges: 'If you aren't resting, you are a slave to something.'*

* Quoted by Ruth Haley Barton in *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest* (Transforming Resources), (InterVarsity Press, Kindle Edition), p. 27.

Cole Arthur Riley, creator of Black Liturgies, writes: 'Rest is an act of defiance...the audacity to face the demands of this world and proclaim, "We will not be owned"'.**

** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 157.

I take a moment to reflect in God's presence, am I able to rest on this Sabbath day? If not, why not?

Pause and pray

God, Is there anything I am a slave to? Is there anything that owns me?

Pause and pray

Galatians declares:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 (NIV UK)

Jesus, I thank You that through Your life, death and resurrection, You have set me free from the law of sin and death.

Father, thank You for liberating me from slavery to the demands of a busy and perpetually dissatisfied world.

Holy Spirit, I celebrate the freedom You have given me, and today I declare, 'I will not be owned!'

Pause and pray

Cole Arthur Riley goes on to say, 'Rest is not the reward of our liberation, nor something we lay hold of once we are free. It is the path that delivers us there.'***

*** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 151.

I take a moment now to root these prayers in my life and my community. I pray now for someone I know who needs to experience deliverance from bondage, the salvation of Jesus, and the gift of God's rest 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.

Amen****

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

March 06 2023 (click for audio)

The Messiah Rejected

Today is Monday the 6th of March. This week we are continuing our series praying through Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it looks like to accept Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

See how I love your commandments, LORD.

Give back my life because of your unfailing love.

The very essence of your words is truth;

all your just regulations will stand forever.

Psalm 119:159-160 (NLT)

Pause and pray

I begin my week of reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus by looking at some people who chose to reject His invitation.

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

Mark 14:1-2 (ESV UK)

Israel's leaders had been longing for the Messiah for centuries yet, when He came, His message and His manner did not match their ideals or expectations, and so they decided to kill him. The severity of their reaction reminds me just how hard the human heart can become when it is not in tune with the heart of God.

Ask

Lord Jesus, I never want to reject You or Your ways. I ask You to show me today where my values or

expectations are not in sync with Yours. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that my heart and my mind remain open to You.

Pause and pray

Do I know someone who has stopped following Jesus? Who, for whatever reason, has turned away from him?

Lord Jesus, soften their hearts and call them back to You. Reveal Your power and goodness to them once more.

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.

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

Mark 14:1-2 (ESV UK)

Are there any parts of Jesus' teaching that I am tempted to avoid or reject? Loving my enemies perhaps? Or forgiving someone who has hurt me? Perhaps I struggle to surrender my ambitions or my finances to God? Whatever I struggle with, I bring it to the Lord now.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I choose today to obey Your commandments, even the ones I find challenging. By Your Holy Spirit, enable me to do what I cannot do in my own strength.

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:

If you love me, you will obey my teaching. My Father will love you, and we will come to you and make our home with you.

Adapted from John 14:23 (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.

March 07 2023 (click for audio)

Costly Worship

Today is Tuesday the 7th of March. This week we are continuing our series praying through Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it looks like to accept Jesus' Invitation to 'Come, follow Me'.

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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 68...

*You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
Your people settled in it,
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.
Psalm 68:9-10 (NIV UK)*

Pause and pray

Today's reading depicts an astonishingly costly act of worship...

*And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."
Mark 14:3-6 (ESV UK)*

I am in awe of this woman; she is so in love with Jesus that she is willing to sacrifice the equivalent of a year's pay to honor Him. Yet my heart is often more like that of those who criticized her. I am

sometimes consumed by concerns about the cost of things and whether I'm using what I have wisely. I can allow worries about money and the cost of living to distract me from what Jesus is doing in my life.

Ask

Lord Jesus, I bring my financial needs to You and ask You to meet them. Teach me to truly place my security in You, not my bank balance. How can I be generous with the resources I have today?

Pause and pray

'A year's pay' varies greatly depending on a person's circumstances. I live in a world where some CEOs, consultants and celebrities can make more money in a single day than many other people make in a year.

Lord, I cry out for those who are being exploited and exhausted in low-paying jobs. I pray for justice in the form of real living wages - wages that allow people to thrive rather than just survive.

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...

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."

Mark 14:3-6 (ESV UK)

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

I am struck by the fact that the woman 'broke' the jar that contained the perfume. There was no going back for her now, no way she could change her mind. She was all-in! Are there any parts of my life that I am protecting or keeping from Jesus? Any areas where Jesus is inviting me to go all-in?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, You call me to follow You in every area of my life. I recommit myself to this today and yield to You the parts of myself that I struggle to surrender. You are worth more than anything else. I choose to be all-in for 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 the book of Genesis:

"Do not be afraid... for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

Genesis 15:1b (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.

March 08 2023 (click for audio)

Bucking Conventions (International Women's Day)

Today is Wednesday the 8th of March, celebrated around the world as International Women's Day. Today we continue our 'Follow Me' series, praying through Mark's Gospel, by looking at one woman's act of worship - an act that blessed Jesus greatly as He faced a time of great turmoil.

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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*Now let your unfailing love comfort me,
just as you promised me, your servant.
Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live,
for your instructions are my delight.
Psalm 119:76-77 (NLT)*

Pause and pray

Jesus is only days away from His arrest and violent crucifixion. A woman has poured a jar of incredibly expensive perfume over Him as an act of devotion, inciting the criticism of others present...

*But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."
Mark 14:6-9 (ESV UK)*

While the rest of her community do not appreciate the significance of what the woman is doing, Jesus takes great encouragement from this woman's act, treating it as a prophetic sign of what is about to happen to Him. What seems wasteful to the others speaks profoundly to Jesus, reminding Him of His mission and acting as a sign that His Father is in control of events as Jesus prepares to face the toughest days of His life.

Ask

Is there a situation I am facing today that fills me with worry or anxiety? A problem about which I could really use a specific word of encouragement or some direction from God?

Lord, please speak into my situation. Through a scripture, a word, or the intervention of a friend, assure me that You are with me.

Pause and pray

This International Women's Day I ask You, Lord, to protect and encourage my Christian sisters who live under regimes that oppress women as second class citizens, denying them the education, freedom or opportunities they offer to men. Call Your Church to challenge these injustices and give my sisters wisdom and courage to worship Jesus, resist injustice, and share Your good news with all women.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Mark 14:6-9 (ESV UK)

By choosing to pour such an expensive jar of oil on Jesus' head, this woman must have known that her actions could provoke scorn or hostility. Yet she was willing to risk looking foolish in order to minister to Jesus. Am I willing to risk my public image to express my faith?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me for caring more about how other people perceive me than I do about sharing my love for You. I choose today to lay down my image and reputation in order to publicly acknowledge that I follow 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 the book of Jeremiah:

'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:13-14a (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.

March 09 2023 (click for audio)

Betrayal

Today is Thursday the 9th of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it means to accept Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 108...

I will thank you, LORD, among all the people.

I will sing your praises among the nations.

For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Psalm 108:3-4 (NLT)

Pause and pray

After three years of public ministry, Jesus had accumulated a large group of followers. At the core of that community were twelve men He was especially close to, men He trusted and with whom He shared almost every area of His life...

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Mark 14:10-11 (ESV UK)

Few things will cause me greater pain and confusion than a betrayal by someone close to me. As I wrestle with the difficult emotions that such experiences stir, I take comfort from the fact that Jesus experienced the same thing. He understands my feelings and is able to help me on my journey towards healing.

Ask

Lord Jesus, remind me today of Your unwavering faithfulness. While human beings may fail me, You always remain trustworthy. Where broken trust has caused damage in my life, I ask You to bring healing. Fill me with Your love and hope today.

Pause and pray

Do I know somebody who has been betrayed by someone close to them? I bring them before the Lord now.

Lord Jesus, comfort those who have been stung by betrayal. Let them know that You understand the enormity of what they are dealing With.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Mark 14:10-11 (ESV UK)

Though theologians do have theories about Judas' motivation, Mark offers me very little explanation for his betrayal. When I am wronged or let down by someone, I can easily let myself become consumed and upset by trying to understand all the 'whys' and 'hows', but the truth is that human beings are complex, and I may never understand what drove them.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I accept that I may never know the reasoning behind other people's choices or actions. Instead of wrestling too long with those questions, I simply entrust those who have hurt me to Your good and fair judgment.

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 that I can...

[be] confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

March 10 2023 (click for audio)

Harriet Tubman: Hero of Justice

Today is Friday the 10th of March, feast of the abolitionist, Harriet Tubman, who died on this day in 1913. On Feast Days we pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission. Today therefore, we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Harriet Tubman, a hero of justice.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's saving power today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 18...

I love you, LORD;

you are my strength.

The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;

my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.

He is my shield, the power that saves me,

and my place of safety.

I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,

and he saved me from my enemies.

Psalm 18:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Araminta Ross was born into slavery sometime around the year 1820 in Maryland, USA. Although she never learned to read or write, her mother furnished her mind with a rich treasure of stories from the Bible. As she grew up, her faith also grew strong, along with a determined desire to be free. In 1849 she realized it was not enough simply to pray for deliverance from slavery, 'She needed to combine faith with action. By escaping to the North,' writes historian Catherine Clinton, 'she felt she would be doing God's will.'*

*Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*(New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004), Kindle Edition, Loc. 587.

After a remarkable escape, she made her way to freedom in Pennsylvania and, as was common for former slaves, took a new name: Harriet Tubman.

Along the way, Harriet had been helped by ‘the Underground Railroad’ – an undercover network of men and women assisting escaped slaves along the track to freedom. Now that she was free, Harriet was not content to leave her extended family behind in slavery, and so she became a ‘conductor’ on the Railroad, rescuing many of her family members, and hundreds of others, and escorting them on their journey north. Given the code name Moses, Harriet became a leading abolitionist. In fact, she was so successful that slave owners posted a \$40,000 reward for her capture or death.

Thomas Garret, a stationmaster in the Underground Railroad, said of Harriet that he had never met anyone ‘who had more confidence in the voice of God spoken direct to her soul.’**

**Lillie B. Chase Wyman, *The Story of Harriet Tubman* (Bayside, NY: A. J. Cornell Publications, 2011), p. 114.

She could elude patrols and pursuers with as much ease and unconcern as an eagle would soar through the heavens. She “had faith in God”; always asked Him what to do, and direct her, “which,” she said, “He always did.” She would talk about “consulting with God,” or “asking of Him,” just as one would consult a friend upon matters of business; and she said, “He never deceived [me].”***

***Robert C. Plumb, *The Better Angels; Five Women Who Changed Civil War America*, (Sterling, VA.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2020), p. 158.

A few years later, during the American Civil War, Harriet Tubman served both as a scout and as a nurse, and she became the first woman in American history to lead a military assault – the Combahee Ferry Raid – freeing more than 700 slaves. In her later years she continued to champion justice; this time joining the struggle for women’s rights. She never gave up.

‘It wasn’t me, it was the Lord!’ Harriet is reported to have said. ‘I always told Him, I trust you. I don’t know where to go or what to do, but I expect You to lead me. And He always did.’****

****Robert C. Plumb, *The Better Angels; Five Women Who Changed Civil War America*, (Sterling, VA.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2020), p. 158.

Ask

Is there a situation I have been struggling with, something that I have been praying about, where I now need to combine faith with action?

Using Harriet’s prayer as my own, I pray, ‘God, I trust You. I don’t know where to go, or what to do, but I expect You to lead me.’

Pause and pray

God, I pray that You would continue to raise up champions to combat modern slavery in all its forms, those who would boldly and sacrificially go behind enemy lines and lead people to freedom.

Pause and pray

Yield

Harriet often preached the power of persistence:

If you are tired, keep going; if you are scared, keep going; if you are hungry, keep going; if you want to taste freedom, keep going.****

****Catherine Clinton, Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom, Loc. 3840.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, today I lean into the grace that is sufficient for me, Your power that is made perfect in my weakness(2 Cor. 12:9),and, I keep going.

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.

March 11 2023 (click for audio)

Guidance and Direction

Today is Saturday the 11th of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it means to accept Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today in God's instruction, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 19...

*The instructions of the Lord are perfect,
reviving the soul.*

*The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

*The commandments of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.*

Psalm 19:7-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

In today's passage Jesus gives two of His disciples some very specific instructions...

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:12-16 (ESV UK)

I love that these disciples don't seem at all phased by the incredibly precise set of signs Jesus sends them to look for! They've spent so long with Jesus that they simply trust His words and get on with obeying Him. I remind myself that if I am to follow Jesus then I too must listen for His guidance and be ready to do as He asks.

Ask

Lord Jesus, I want to grow in my ability to recognize Your voice. Please speak to me in a clear and specific way today and give me the courage to obey.

Pause and pray

Having heard Jesus' instructions, these two disciples then had a job to do: preparing a meal!

I pray for my Christian sisters and brothers who provide meals and hospitality to those living on the margins of society. Lord Jesus, please speak words of encouragement, and give insight and direction to them today as they seek to express Your love and hope to those they are serving.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:12-16 (ESV UK)

Once Jesus had given His instructions, the disciples were quick to carry them out. Is there anything that God has asked me to do that I haven't done yet? Is there something I've been putting off?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, to follow You means obeying Your commands. When I'm tempted to delay or avoid acting on Your word to me, help me choose immediate obedience instead. I love to follow 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 the book of James:

When you look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continue in it – not forgetting what you have heard but doing it – you will be blessed in what you do.

Adapted from James 1:25 (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.

March 12 2023 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer - Lent

Today is Sunday the 12th of March, a day of rest on which we interrupt our weekday pattern and return again to our shorter, simpler Sabbath prayer for Lent. As I pray through this Sabbath prayer for a third time, I invite the Holy Spirit to let its words sink a little deeper from my mind, into my heart.

Throughout the past week I've been reflecting on the Gospel of Mark, following Jesus on His way to the cross. Today however, I skip again to the end of the Easter story, celebrating the risen Christ who has delivered us from the cruel bondage of sin and death.

The commandment to rest on the Sabbath was given to the children of Israel - a people God delivered from slavery, a life of unrelenting toil.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV UK)

The gift of the Sabbath reminds me that I am free. Or am I?

Author Adele Calhoun challenges: 'If you aren't resting, you are a slave to something.'*

* Quoted by Ruth Haley Barton in *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*(Transforming Resources), (InterVarsity Press, Kindle Edition), p. 27.

Cole Arthur Riley, writes: 'Rest is an act of defiance... the audacity to face the demands of this world and proclaim, "We will not be owned"'.**

** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us*(London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 157.

I take a moment to reflect in God's presence, am I able to rest on this Sabbath day? If not, why Not?

Pause and pray

God, is there anything I am a slave to? Is there anything that owns me?

Pause and Pray

Galatians declares:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 (NIV UK)

Jesus, I thank You that through Your life, death and resurrection you have set me free from the law of sin and death.

Father, thank You for liberating me from slavery to the demands of a busy and perpetually dissatisfied world.

Holy Spirit, I celebrate the freedom You have given me, and today I declare, 'I will not be owned!'

Pause and pray

Cole Arthur Riley goes on to say, 'Rest is not the reward of our liberation, nor something we lay hold of once we are free. It is the path that delivers us there'.***

*** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 151.

I take a moment now to root these prayers in my life and my community. I pray now for someone I know who needs to experience deliverance from bondage, the salvation of Jesus, and the gift of God's rest 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.****

Amen

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

March 13 2023 (click for audio)

Love's Last Appeal

Today is Monday the 13th of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it means to accept Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Ask

Who am I disappointed with right now? Who do I feel has let me down or hurt me?

Lord Jesus, I ask You to help me let go of these feelings. I don't want them to take root in my heart and ruin the relationship. Using the words of today's Psalm, I give these burdens to You, and I receive Your care for me (Psalm 55:22a).

Pause and pray

Who do I know that has left the Church because they are angry with God, or left God because they are angry with the Church?

Lord Jesus, I ask You to reach out to them. Show me if there's some way that I can reach out to them too.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

Mark 14:17-21 (ESV UK)

‘Jesus could have stopped Judas,’ writes William Barclay. ‘All he had to do was tell the other eleven what Judas was planning, and Judas wouldn’t have left that room alive.’ But instead, Jesus makes ‘love’s last appeal’.* Jesus’ love appeals to Judas. Jesus’ truth warns him. But there is no compulsion. And so it is with me.

* William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark (The Daily Study Bible)*, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1975), p. 335.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord Jesus, I’m uncomfortably aware of the times when I have let You down: in my actions, my words and my thoughts. As I surrender my sense of shame to You today, I pray the famous words of the former slave trader, John Newton:

‘Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see.’

Yielding Promise

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

...able to keep [me] from stumbling and to present [me] before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

Jude 1:24 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

March 14 2023 (click for audio)

The Eucharist

Today is Tuesday the 14th of March, and we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, follow Me'.

As usual, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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...

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Oh, give me back my joy again;

you have broken me—

now let me rejoice.

Don't keep looking at my sins.

Remove the stain of my guilt.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a loyal spirit within me.

Psalm 51:7-10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, I am reflecting on a significant moment during the meal that Jesus shared with His friends, which Christians around the world now celebrate as the Last Supper, Holy Communion, or the Eucharist...

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Mark 14:22-25 (ESVUK)

The author Eugene Peterson writes, ‘Without the Eucharist it is very easy to drift into a spirituality that is dominated by ideas about Jesus instead of receiving life from Jesus. The Eucharist says a plain ‘no’ to all that. The Eucharist puts Jesus in his place, dying on the cross and giving us that sacrificed life. And it puts us in our place: opening our hands and receiving the remission of our sins, which is our salvation.’*

*Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays In Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2005), p. 203.

Ask

Has my faith drifted into learning about Jesus instead of receiving life from Him?

Lord Jesus, as I open my hands in front of me, I receive life from You today.

Pause and pray

Jesus said, ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (John 10:10b, NIVUK).

Who do I know that really needs to experience this ‘full life’ in some way? I pray for them now.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Mark 14:22-25 (ESV UK)

Jesus had just told His disciples that one of them would betray him. I wonder if Jesus caught Judas’ eye a few moments later, when He took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and passed it around, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ (Matthew 26:28, NIV UK)

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Remembering the sacrifice of Jesus, I use the words of the Anglican Church’s Service of Communion as my own prayer today:

Almighty God, I thank You for feeding me with the body and blood of Your Son Jesus Christ. Through Him I offer you my soul and body to be a living sacrifice. Send me out in the power of Your Spirit to live and work for Your praise and glory.**

**Adapted from Church of England Holy Communion Service, Order One, Prayer after Communion (<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/holy-communion-service>)

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:

He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased [my] freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave [my] sins.

Ephesians 1:7 (NLT)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

March 15 2023 (click for audio)

Falling Away

Today is Wednesday the 15th of March, and we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

The LORD is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.

He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.

For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

Psalm 103:8-11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the aftermath of the Last Supper, as Jesus and His disciples left the place where they'd been eating together...

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

Mark 14:26-31 (ESV UK)

The disciples were disturbed and confused. Their meal together hadn't been the Passover celebration they'd been expecting, and Jesus had said and done some strange things. And then, to top it all, He told them, 'this very night, you will all fall away'. (Matthew 26:31)

The truth is that I have 'fallen away' many times. Maybe I haven't flatly denied that I am a follower of Jesus, like Peter was about to do. And maybe I haven't run away in fear, like the other disciples soon would. But I have let my faith grow cold sometimes.

Ask

How do I feel right now? Am I full of faith - 'on fire' for Jesus - or has the fire dwindled? Have I 'fallen away' from following Jesus in some way?

Pause and pray

Who do I know that seems to have 'fallen away' from following Jesus? Maybe a friend or a relative? Maybe a child that seems less interested in Jesus now that they've reached their teenage years?

Lord Jesus, I name these loved ones quietly before You now and I pray that their love for You would be Rekindled.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

Mark 14:26-31 (ESV UK)

Having celebrated the Passover together, it's likely that the hymn that Jesus and His disciples sang was Psalm 118. Given that Jesus was shortly going to be arrested, tortured, and crucified, the words of the Psalm are even more poignant: 'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love endures forever' (Psalm 118:1, NIV UK).

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Using a few more verses from Psalm 118 as my prayer, I yield to God's goodness:

When hard pressed, I cry to You, LORD,
and You bring me into a spacious place.

You are with me; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me? ...

You are good, Your love endures forever.

Adapted from Psalm 118: 5-7a,1 (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 1 Peter that:

The God of all grace, who called [me] to his eternal glory in Christ... will himself restore [me] and make [me] strong, firm and steadfast.

1 Peter 5:10 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,

being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost,

proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

March 16 2023 (click for audio)

Gethsemane

Today is Thursday the 16th of March, and we are continuing our Lent seeries praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 23...

Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff

protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me

in the presence of my enemies.

You honor me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

Psalm 23:4-5 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today, we're reflecting on the darkest, most difficult night of Jesus' life...

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

Mark 14:32-35 (ESV UK)

'Gethsemane' literally means 'the oil press', which is fitting because it is here that Jesus experiences the most intense, crushing pressure of His life: spiritually, emotionally and psychologically.* Jesus begs

for another way, an alternative to the terror ahead. But in order to save the world, there is no other path.

* Adapted from Pete Greig, *God on Mute* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2020), p. 35.

Ask

What am I wrestling with in prayer right now?

Father God, I offer these hopes, these longings, these battles to You once again. And where there are no answers, for whatever reason, I choose to open my heart and receive Your presence.

Pause and pray

Who do I know that seems to be experiencing intense, or even crushing pressure right now?

Good Shepherd, I ask You to draw near to them as they walk through their dark valley. Protect them and comfort them. Lead them beside quiet waters and restore their souls.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

Mark 14:32-35 (ESV UK)

One of the most popular activities in the 'Prayer Spaces in Schools' resource library** is called 'Big Questions'. Children and young people are invited to write one question for God onto a piece of torn-up cardboard. Many of the questions sound a lot like Jesus' prayer: 'God, if all things are possible for You, why can't You take suffering away?'

** <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/big-questions/>

What would be my 'Big Question' for God today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, sometimes I find it hard to look beyond my present circumstances, especially when life is difficult. Help me to fix my eyes on You and follow You.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, Psalm 23 reminds me that:

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

Psalms 23:1 (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.

March 17 2023 (click for audio)

St. Patrick: Hero of Prayer, Mission and Justice

Today is Friday the 17th of March, feast of the missionary pioneer St. Patrick who died on this day in the year 461. 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 Patrick, a fearless hero of prayer, mission, and justice.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice in God's faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 107...

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!

His faithful love endures forever.

Psalm 107:1 (NLT)

Patrick is known as the Apostle of Ireland. When he was in his teens, he was captured and taken from Britain to Ireland as a slave, but he was rescued and returned home in a ship that he had seen in a vision from God. Later, as a free man, Patrick heard an Irish voice say to him in a dream: 'Come back and walk once more among us.' So he returned.

In his Confession, Patrick wrote about his time as a slave in Ireland.

I would pray all the time, right through the day. More and more the love of God and fear of him grew strong within me, and as my faith grew, so the Spirit became more and more active, so that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and at night only slightly less. Although I might be staying in a forest or out on a mountainside, it would be the same; even before dawn broke, I would be aroused to pray. In snow, in frost, in rain, I would hardly notice any discomfort, and I was never slack but always full of energy. It is clear to me now, that this was due to the fervor of the Spirit within me.*

* Saint Patrick, *The Confession of Saint Patrick and Letter to Coroticus*. John Skinner, trans. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1998) pp. 38–39.

Made to shepherd the flocks of his captors, instead of dwelling in bitterness and despair, the young, enslaved Patrick turned his heart constantly to the Lord. Redeeming the time, he grew strong in faith and prayer. This prepared him to receive a vision of the ship that would take him to freedom, and developed in him a shepherd's heart for Ireland.

Ask

I think of my life now: do I feel joyful or sorrowful? Am I busy or inactive? Is my heart turned to the Lord?

Lord, help me to make the most of my time, whatever my situation, and would You shape me for good things.

Pause and pray

I wonder how Patrick felt when God called him to shepherd the very people who had enslaved him?

Where or to whom are You calling me, Lord? Is there a person or people that You want me to bless? Show me who is on Your heart, even if they are the last people I would expect.

Pause and pray

Yield

In Patrick's Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus, he wrote:

May God inspire these men sometime to come to their senses in regard to God again, so that they may repent, however latter day, of their grave crimes, namely homicide against the brothers of the Lord, and that they free these baptized women whom they have taken, so that then they may deserve to live to God and be made whole once more, here, now and for eternity.**

** Saint Patrick, The Confession of Saint Patrick and Letter to Coroticus. John Skinner, trans. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1998) p. 16.

Patrick campaigned fiercely for the liberation of slaves in Ireland, standing up to gangs who killed men and captured women. His faith was not just a matter of inner piety, but a justice-loving ethic that longed to see all of Ireland – including the soldiers – transformed by the beauty, freedom, and love of Christ.

How might my faith be moved into action for those enslaved and oppressed in my world today?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

I take a moment of silence to reflect on what You're saying to me through the life of Patrick. Lord, show me how my faith could be moved to action and consume my heart with Your love for those in danger.

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...

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17 (ESV 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.

March 18 2023 (click for audio)

Watch and Pray

Today is Saturday the 18th of March, and we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

Today I join in with the ancient cry of all God's people, echoing the longing and the lament of Psalm 88...

O LORD, God of my salvation,

I cry out to you by day.

I come to you at night.

Now hear my prayer;

listen to my cry.

For my life is full of troubles,

and death draws near.

Psalm 88:1-3 (NLT)

Pause and pray

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had taken His friends, Peter, James, and John, to be nearby while He wrestled in prayer alone. Today, I'm reflecting on what Jesus found when He went back to them...

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

Mark 14:36-39 (ESV UK)

I'm familiar with the story of the disciples in Gethsemane because I replay it in my own life almost every day. My spirit is willing to be true to Christ, to be kind to people, to speak and be good news wherever I go; but so often my flesh is weak.

The Apostle Paul shared this same struggle. 'I want to do what is good, but I don't,' he wrote. 'I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway' (Romans 7:19, NLT).

Ask

What good have I wanted to do, but not done? What wrong have I done, even though I didn't want to? In a quiet moment, I talk with Jesus about this.

Pause and pray

Jesus asked His disciples; 'Could you not watch and pray with me?' Is there someone that Jesus is asking me to 'watch and pray' with at the moment.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

Mark 14:36-39 (ESV UK)

Jesus knew that He was about to die, but He knew that death was not the end. As His follower, I can suffer too. I can grieve, and one day I will die. And yet, as the Apostle Paul says, I do not 'grieve like people who have no hope' (1 Thessalonians 4:13b, NLT) because death is not the end of my story too.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, I use Jesus' prayer of surrender as I offer my life, my story, to Him once again:

In my career: yet not as I will, but as You will.

In my relationships: yet not as I will, but as You will.

In every part of my life: yet not as I will, but as You will.

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 10:

I give you eternal life, and you will never perish. No one can snatch you away from me, for my Father has given you to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else.

Adapted from John 10:28-29a (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.

March 19 2023 (click for audio)

Mark's Gospel/Follow Me

Today is Sunday the 19th of March, a day of rest on which we interrupt our weekday pattern and return once again to a shorter, simpler Sabbath prayer for Lent.

Throughout the past week I've been reflecting on the book of Mark, following Jesus on His way to the cross. Today however, I'm skipping to the end of the Easter story, celebrating the risen Christ who has delivered us from the cruel bondage of sin and death.

The commandment to rest on the Sabbath was given to the children of Israel - a people God delivered from slavery, a life of unrelenting toil.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV UK)

The gift of the Sabbath reminds me that I am free. Or am I?

Author Adele Calhoun challenges: 'If you aren't resting, you are a slave to something.'*

* Quoted by Ruth Haley Barton in *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest* (Transforming Resources), (InterVarsity Press, Kindle Edition), p. 27.

Cole Arthur Riley, creator of Black Liturgies, writes: 'Rest is an act of defiance...the audacity to face the demands of this world and proclaim, "We will not be owned"'.**

** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 157

I take a moment to reflect in God's presence, am I able to rest on this Sabbath day? If not, why not?

Pause and pray

God, Is there anything I am a slave to? Is there anything that owns me?

Pause and pray

Galatians declares:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 (NIV UK)

Jesus, I thank You that through Your life, death, and resurrection, You have set me free from the law of sin and death.

Father, thank You for liberating me from slavery to the demands of a busy and perpetually dissatisfied world.

Holy Spirit, I celebrate the freedom You have given me, and today I declare, 'I will not be owned!'

Pause and pray

Cole Arthur Riley goes on to say, 'Rest is not the reward of our liberation, nor something we lay hold of once we are free. It is the path that delivers us there.'***

*** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 151.

I take a moment now to root these prayers in my life and my community. I pray now for someone I know who needs to experience deliverance from bondage, the salvation of Jesus, and the gift of God's rest 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.

Amen****

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

March 20 2023 (click for audio)

A Tale of Two Gardens

Today is Monday the 20th of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves what it means to accept Jesus' invitation to, 'Come, follow Me'.

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, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to reflect on God's presence today, joining with the ancient cry of all God's people in the words of Psalm 88...

O Lord, God of my salvation,

I cry out to you by day.

I come to you at night.

Now hear my prayer;

listen to my cry.

Psalm 88:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am joining Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is greatly distressed and has been deep in prayer. He has asked the disciples to stay awake and pray but already found them asleep once. Jesus now returns to the group a second time.

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Mark 14:40-43 (ESV UK)

Jesus uses these final moments to pray, preparing His soul for all that is to come. And He instructs the disciples to do the same. Although they are not about to be crucified, they are on the cusp of a

terrifying series of events. Watching their friend and rabbi be arrested. Witnessing a crowd grow violent and murderous. Finding themselves vulnerable and afraid for their own lives. With all this ahead of them, Jesus, ever the great teacher, uses this moment to invite His apprentices to access their most powerful resource: prayer.

Ask

As I think ahead to my day, I know that it can go in very different directions, depending on my readiness to pray, and my openness to Christ's leading..

I take time now to submit myself and my day to God, preparing my soul for all that is to come.

Pause and pray

I think now of friends or family who might have given up on prayer.

I take some time to pray that those people will rediscover the power of prayer.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Mark 14:40-43 (ESV UK)

At the beginning of the Bible I read about Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. And here I see Jesus rewriting the story of humankind through His submission in the Garden of Gethsemane and by His death on the cross.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, as I see the power of Your surrender, I yield once again to Your will in my life. Help me today to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, praying Your will not mine be done. And may Your kingdom come in my life as I submit to Your will once again.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I remember that the Lord who loves me is with me today in the same way he was with Paul when he wrote in Romans 8:

The Spirit will help me in my weakness. I do not know what I ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for me through wordless groans.

Adapted from Romans 8:26 (ESV 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.

March 21 2023 (click for audio)

A Loveless Kiss

Today is Tuesday the 21st of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to 'Come, follow Me'.

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 Mark's Gospel. '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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

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

your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds...

How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

All humanity finds shelter

in the shadow of your wings.

Psalm 36:5,7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I return to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus has just told His disciples to stand up and prepare themselves: His betrayer is about to appear amongst the trees...

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Mark 14:44-47 (ESV UK)

The full weight of Judas' betrayal is seen in Mark's description: he is one of the twelve, he greets Jesus as 'Rabbi,' and he kisses him. The shock the other disciples must have felt in this moment would have been immense. This wasn't just an acquaintance, or even a friend; Judas was one of them.

Betrayal by those closest to me can be one of the most painful and challenging things I face in life. Loved ones who let me down. Friends who hurt me. Family who fail me when I need them most. Loveless kisses which sting deeply.

Ask

Am I feeling hurt or betrayed by someone close to me right now? I ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and to bring any relational breakdown into the light.

I pray now for the presence, peace, and intervention of Christ in any hurt or betrayal I may be carrying in my heart, asking for the strength to forgive.

Pause and pray

I pray now for someone I know who has recently been betrayed by someone they love.

I ask for the healing presence of Christ in their midst.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Mark 14:44-47 (ESV UK)

In the shock of the moment, one of those who stood by drew his sword.

How easy it is for betrayal and fear to lead to anger and violence. I'm unlikely to grab a physical sword, but I can very easily become aggressive with my words. The old adage is true: hurt people hurt people.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I recognize the hurt places in my own heart where I have been betrayed or harmed by those I trusted. I ask for Your healing hand to help me process that pain in a way that doesn't hurt others, but rather leads me deeper into intimacy and flourishing with You. Thank You for Your faithfulness: I trust You with my whole heart once 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 Isaiah:

'Even if mothers forget,

I'd never forget you—never.

Look, I've written your names on the backs of my hands.'

Isaiah 49:15 (The Message)

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.

March 22 2023 (click for audio)

Violence Meets Strength

Today is Wednesday the 22nd of March. This week we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's faithfulness today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 57...

Your unfailing love is as high as the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Psalm 57:10 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas has signaled his betrayal with a kiss, Jesus has been seized and violence followed when a sword was drawn...

And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." And they all left him and fled.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Mark 14:48-52 (ESV UK)

The violent and unruly arrest of Jesus does not seem to disturb His inner peace. Instead, He calmly and confidently challenges the soldiers with His words, pointing to Old Testament prophecy concerning the death of the Messiah, and thereby asserting His own power and authority, even in this unlikely moment.

Jesus makes it clear that His submission is to the will of His Father, not the threat of the sword. They are not taking His life from Him, rather He is willingly giving it for them.

Ask

I take some time now to think about any areas of my life where I feel overwhelmed or powerless.

Lord Jesus, thank You that You have not given me a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). I receive Your spirit now.

Pause and pray

I think now of a violent corner of the world.

I take time to pray for this country: its people, its pastors, and its politicians. I pray for God's peace and presence amid the darkness.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." And they all left him and fled.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Mark 14:48-52 (ESV UK)

'And they all left him and fled.' This short line of Scripture is simply heartbreaking.

As I reflect on the weight of betrayal and loneliness that Jesus endured on His journey to the cross, I am reminded that my unfaithfulness is always met by God's perfect faithfulness. My propensity to leave Him or forget Him is met by His refusal to abandon me or let me go.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I thank You for Your perfect, unfailing love for me. I'm so sorry for the fickleness in my own heart and I yield once again to the great love that You have shown me, and to the plans that You have for 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 Deuteronomy:

'I go before you and will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV UK adapted into first person)

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.

March 23 2023 (click for audio)

False Witness

Today is Thursday the 23rd of March and we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

*He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.*

Psalm 103:10-12 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm reflecting on the beginning of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, the rabbinic Jewish law courts. Jesus has been arrested under the cover of darkness and is now being tried for a capital case at night-time – something which was illegal in the Sanhedrin at the time. Mark makes it very clear that what we are about to witness is anything but a fair trial...

And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.

Mark 14:53-56 (ESV UK)

In Deuteronomy, the Jewish law on witnesses to a crime is laid out: 'One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses' (Deuteronomy 19:15, NIVUK).

In today's passage I see this process enacted in the trial of Jesus. The Council, desperate to put Jesus to death, calls forward witnesses: however, their stories don't line up. They are therefore legally considered false witnesses. In such a case, Deuteronomic law demands: 'do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party' (Deuteronomy 19:19, NIVUK).

The false witnesses should have been taken for execution.

Yet of course, we know that this does not happen. Instead, Jesus, the innocently accused, ultimately receives the full punishment of death on a cross. Jesus silently accepts their punishment as His own.

Ask

I am soberly reminded of the weight of my own sin, and the Messiah who died to give me life.

I take a moment to confess and repent of my sin, receiving afresh the forgiveness of God today.

Pause and pray

I wonder what motivated the false witnesses to stand up in a court of law and lie about Jesus. Was it fear that motivated them? Greed? Jealousy?

I think now of someone who has spoken unkind or untrue words about me. I take this moment to pray for them and ask that God might move in their brokenness and bring healing to their heart.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.

Mark 14:53-56 (ESV UK)

In Deuteronomy, the law about punishing false witnesses concludes like this: 'Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye' (Deuteronomy 19:21, NIVUK).

Not long before His arrest, Jesus stood on a mount and delivered the most famous sermon ever given. At that time He said: 'You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, do not resist an evil person' (Matthew 5:38-39, NIV UK).

Replacing vengeance with grace, punishment with forgiveness, Jesus changes humanity's story forever.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Gracious Jesus, I yield once again to Your way: to the way of forgiveness and non-violent resistance. I confess that the way of an eye for an eye often feels easier, and it tempts me. Please give me the courage to commit to Your peaceful revolution, writing a story of hope with 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 Romans 8:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set [you] free from the law of sin and death.

Adapted from Romans 8:1-2 (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.

March 24 2023 (click for audio)

Oscar Romero: Hero of Prayer and Justice

Today is Friday the 24th of March, feast of Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador who championed the cause of the poor and marginalized and was assassinated on this day in 1980. On Feast Days we pause to celebrate the stories and learn from the lives of heroes of faith, whose collective witness embodies our six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These are: prayer and creativity, justice and hospitality, learning and mission. Today therefore, we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Óscar Romero, a hero of prayer and justice.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

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

Rejoice and Reflect

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

I will rejoice in the LORD.

I will be glad because he rescues me.

With every bone in my body I will praise him:

"LORD, who can compare with you?

Who else rescues the helpless from the strong?

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

Psalm 35:9-10 (NLT)

Óscar Romero was the archbishop of the city of San Salvador at a time of terrible violence and oppression during El Salvador's civil war. By nature, a contemplative, conservative man, Romero was a fierce opponent of economic inequality and of the kidnapping, torture, and murder of his people. He became a beacon of hope for the poor. Although his killers were never identified, it is almost certain that Romero's very public stand against the injustice of the military government was the reason he was shot dead as he celebrated Mass.

In his book, *The Violence of Love*,* Romero wrote:

The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword,
the violence of hatred.

It is the violence of love,
of brotherhood,
the violence that wills to beat weapons
into sickles for work.

* Óscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 3.

Romero saw that love cannot be theoretical. Neither is it soft or weak. But there is a violence to love. Not a violence that hurts people but a violence that resists all that hurts people. It stands up to the powers that exploit and destroy God's beloved children. It is a violent passion that shouts, 'No more! In the name of Christ, no more!' It's this kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Ask

Do I feel this intense and sacrificial kind of love for others? What might loving like this cost me?

Jesus, I ask You to give me the courage to love as You do.

Pause and pray

I think of those who face threats, injustice, and the violence of war around the world today. Those in Myanmar, Ukraine, Colombia, Somalia,** and in many other places.

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

God, would You demonstrate Your love by protecting the vulnerable and raising up peacemakers.

Pause and pray

Yield

In *The Violence of Love*, Óscar Romero continues:

All of us, if we really want to know the meaning of conversion and of faith and confidence in another, must become poor, or at least make the cause of the poor our own inner motivation. That is when one begins to experience faith and conversion: when one has the heart of the poor, when one knows that financial capital, political influence, and power are worthless, and that without God we are nothing. To feel that need of God is faith and conversion.***

*** Óscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 135.

Romero believed that God has a bias towards the poor, not because the poor are less likely to sin than other people, but because they know their needs and are often powerless to meet them. Those who are wealthy can easily become self-sufficient and lose sight of their need of others, and their dependency on God.

Can I let go of my striving for wealth, power, and influence, and instead recognize my utter dependence on God's love, mercy, and salvation?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, You know that deep down I like to be, or at least appear to be, self-sufficient. I find it easy to pretend that I don't need others, or even You sometimes. But I know this isn't true. Lord, show me my utter need of You. Show me the poverty of my own heart. Show me how to make the cause of the poor my own. I yield my heart, my all, to You now.

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 41...

*Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him*
Psalm 41:1 (ESV 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.

March 25 2023 (click for audio)

I Will Rebuild This Temple

Today is Saturday the 25th of March and we are continuing our Lent series praying through the final chapters of Mark's Gospel, listening for Jesus' invitation to 'Come, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 9...

I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;

I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.

I will be filled with joy because of you.

I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.

Psalm 9:1-2 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I'm continuing to reflect on Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. After a series of inconsistent false testimonies, a specific charge about the destruction of the temple is now leveled at him.

And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"

Mark 14:57-60 (ESV UK)

When Jesus talked about the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, He wasn't talking about the physical building: He was talking about His body.

Jesus' accusers lacked the capacity to see beyond the immediate political, cultural, material context of their surroundings. They pictured the revolution of Jesus being physical, immediate, and powerful in the narrowest sense of the word. Yet Jesus was trying to reveal a far deeper reality.

Ask

It can be difficult for me to see beyond my immediate, material circumstances. I have an idea of what I expect God to do, yet I acknowledge that He is often doing something deeper and richer in me than I can comprehend.

I take a moment now to pray for eyes of faith to see more clearly what God is doing in my life.

Pause and pray

I think now of a friend or family member who struggles to believe God is at work today. I pray for God to gift them with faith and the eyes to see Him at work in their own lives and in the world around them.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"

Mark 14:57-60 (ESV UK)

I am struck by the frustration of the high priest in the face of a calm and silent Jesus: 'Have you no answer to make?' I imagine the Sanhedrin bore witness to many reactions from the accused. Anger, fear, begging, screaming, resisting, weeping, pleading...

But Jesus is silent. Composed. Filled with the peace of God and the certainty that He is exactly where He is supposed to be.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Heavenly Father, I yield once again to Your work in my life, acknowledging the mystery of Your word and asking for eyes of faith to see what You are doing. Jesus, who stood with such resolute calm in the presence of so much anger, violence and injustice, please fill me with Your peace once again.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, I yield to the God who promises me in Romans:

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for me. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? ... [nothing] in all creation will be able to separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

Adapted from Romans 8:34-35a,39 (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.

March 26 2023 (click for audio)

A Sabbath Prayer - Lent

Today is Sunday the 26th of March, a day of rest on which we interrupt our weekday pattern with a shorter, simpler time of prayer that we have been returning to each week.

On Sundays during the season of Lent, we anticipate Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday, just two weeks away. Throughout the past week I've been reflecting on the book of Mark, following Jesus on His way to the Cross. Today however, I'm skipping to the end of the Easter story, celebrating a risen Christ who has delivered us from the cruel bondage of sin and death.

The commandment to rest on the Sabbath was given to the children of Israel - a people God delivered from slavery, a life of unrelenting toil.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV UK)

The gift of the Sabbath reminds me that I am free. Or am I?

Author Adele Calhoun challenges: 'If you aren't resting, you are a slave to something.'*

* Quoted by Ruth Haley Barton in *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest* (Transforming Resources), (InterVarsity Press, Kindle Edition), p. 27.

Cole Arthur Riley, creator of Black Liturgies, writes: 'Rest is an act of defiance ... the audacity to face the demands of this world and proclaim, "We will not be owned"'.**

** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 157.

I take a moment to reflect in God's presence, am I able to rest on this Sabbath day? If not, why not?

Pause and pray

God, is there anything I am a slave to? Is there anything that owns me?

Pause and pray

Galatians declares:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 (NIV UK)

Jesus, I thank You that You have set me free from the law of sin and death.

Father, You have liberated me from slavery to the demands of the world.

Holy Spirit, I celebrate the freedom You have given me, and today I declare, 'I will not be owned!'

Pause and pray

Cole Arthur Riley goes on to say, 'Rest is not the reward of our liberation, nor something we lay hold of once we are free. It is the path that delivers us there.'***

*** Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us* (London: John Murray Press, Kindle Edition), p. 151.

I take a moment now to root these prayers in my life and my community. I pray now for someone I know who needs to experience deliverance from bondage, and the gift of God's rest 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.

Amen****

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

March 27 2023 (click for audio)

Undercover Boss

Today is Monday the 27th of March, and this week we are in the book of Mark, responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him – all the way to the cross.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

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 66...

For by his great power he rules forever.

He watches every movement of the nations;

let no rebel rise in defiance.

Let the whole world bless our God

and loudly sing his praises.

Psalm 66:7-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

In today's passage, Jesus is standing before the priests and the many false witnesses testifying against Him...

But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

Mark 14:61-65 (ESV UK)

There is a television show called Undercover Boss. The CEO of a company disguises themselves as a regular employee. People don't know who she is, so she gets to experience the good, the bad and the ugly of the organization from the inside. At the end of each episode, the boss reveals herself and rewards or reprimands those around her accordingly.

In Mark's story, Jesus is the undercover boss, and experiences first-hand the corruption of those who claim to serve in God's name. In today's passage, He finally reveals Himself.

Ask

In the quiet, I reflect on my last week. If Jesus was living undercover in my life, what might He think of how I'm serving in His name?

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for the leaders in Your church, both in my local congregation and also globally. Forgive them and us when we have not walked worthy of our calling, and when we have disgraced and defamed Your name. I pray that we would please you in every way, and bear fruit in every good work. (COLOSSIANS 1:10).

Pause and pray

Yield

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

But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

Mark 14:61-65 (ESV UK)

Jesus' moment of unveiling is met with disdain and rage. Even with God staring them in the face, the priests refuse to believe.

How many times has God revealed Himself to me, and I've either ignored Him, or willfully turned away, determined to hang on to my own power and autonomy?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Jesus, I'm sorry for the times that I've ignored You when you've revealed Yourself to me, when my personal agendas have gotten in the way of Your good plan for my life. Today, Jesus, You have my attention, my affection, and my allegiance.

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 42:

'I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'
Isaiah 42:6-7 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

March 28 2023 (click for audio)

The Making of a Leader

Today is Tuesday the 28th of March, and this week we are in the book of Mark, responding to Jesus' invitation to follow Him – all the way to 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 Your life. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's unfailing love today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 130...

I am counting on the LORD;

yes, I am counting on him.

I have put my hope in his word.

I long for the Lord

more than sentries long for the dawn,

yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.

O Israel, hope in the LORD;

for with the LORD there is unfailing love.

His redemption overflows.

Psalm 130:5-7 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Jesus is upstairs with the high priests, being maligned and mistreated, but down below, other events are unfolding. As I read this passage, I use my imagination and place myself in the story. The cool of the night before dawn. The warmth of the fire. The fear of discovery.

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the cock crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This

man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately the cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

Mark 14:66-72 (ESV UK)

In an earlier conversation with Jesus that evening, Peter had boasted, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you’ (Mark 14:31, NIVUK). Now in the cold and the dark, desperate for news of his rabbi, and terrified of joining His fate, Peter loses his nerve, falters and fails.

Ask

Have I ever made promises to Jesus I didn’t keep, or found my faith folding under pressure?

Jesus, I’m sorry for my fear and my faithlessness. I’m humbled by my weakness, and I lean into Your mercy and loving kindness.

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for Christian children in what can sometimes be hostile school environments. Would You help them not to be afraid to identify themselves with You and, when confronted, would You give them resilience and a holy boldness. I pray by name now for my children, or grandchildren, or some other children I know.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the cock crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately the cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

Mark 14:66-72 (ESV UK)

I sometimes wonder if it was this moment that was actually the making of Peter - the moment that shaped him into the kind of leader that Jesus would entrust with building His church. Peter is

confronted with the state of his own soul. Self-reliance and arrogance is exposed and dismantled, and from the rubble, humility begins to grow.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I confess to You my latest failure, whatever it may have been. I place the pieces of myself and my life into Your hands and I ask that You would put me back together in a way that pleases You and makes me useful 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 Proverbs 24:

Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.

Proverbs 24:16 (NIV UK)

Closing Prayer

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

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

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

Amen.

March 29 2023 (click for audio)

Accused

Today is Wednesday the 29th of March, and this week we are meditating on the Gospel of Mark, following Jesus in the week before His crucifixion.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in God's authority today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 2...

For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."

The king proclaims the LORD's decree:

"The LORD said to me, 'You are my son.

Today I have become your Father.

Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.'"

Psalm 2:6-8 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I am reflecting on the trials of Jesus. Last night He was with the chief priests. Today He's with Pilate.

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Mark 15:1-5 (ESV UK)

Pilate is astonished at Jesus' silent response to His accusers. He was probably not aware that Jesus was fulfilling the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7 (NIV UK)

Ask

I think of a situation now where I'm facing criticism or being treated unfairly. What is my response?

God, I ask You to help me to hold my tongue, and hold my heart in Your presence. May I respond to Your initiative in this situation rather than react impulsively or defensively.

Pause and pray

God, I pray for the judicial courts in my country. I pray that witnesses would be truthful, jurors impartial, and that judges would be fair. I think of a particular court case I've seen in the news lately and I pray that You would maintain justice and righteousness in that situation.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Mark 15:1-5 (ESV UK)

I'm sure that Pilate had seen a lot of rascals and rogues in his time. But Jesus was completely different, and Pilate was startled by His response. How can I speak (or keep quiet) and live in such a way as to amaze the unbelievers around me?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

God, I yield my tongue to You - to speak when You say speak, and to be silent when You tell me to hold silence. I yield my reputation (and my need to control it) to You as well.

Yielding Promise

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

Commit your way to Me;
trust in Me, and I will act.

I will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.

Adapted from Psalm 37:5-6 (ESV 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.

March 30 2023 (click for audio)

Deadly Envy

Today is Thursday the 30th of March, and this week we are meditating on the Gospel of Mark, following Jesus in the week before His crucifixion.

Pause

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

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

Jesus, 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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

The voice of the LORD twists mighty oaks
and strips the forests bare.

In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"

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 29:9-11 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Today I continue to reflect on Jesus's trials before His crucifixion. He is standing before Pilate and the crowds.

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

Mark 15:6-10 (ESV UK)

Someone once said to me, 'Put us all in the right situation, and we will realize how insecure we are.' I used to think I was pretty secure and not an envious person. But a couple of years ago I became

painfully aware that I was jealous of another's success. I finally had to stop following them on social media so that I would stop comparing myself to them.

Ask

Have I ever been the victim of someone's jealousy? Or have I ever acted out of jealousy in a way that caused others harm?

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for young adults. In this season of life of getting established in school, work, and family, help them live authentically and not anxiously compare themselves to others. Today I pray for a young adult I know.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

Mark 15:6-10 (ESV UK)

The priests are accusing Jesus of insurrection, but Pilate is not convinced. Looking for a way to spare Him, Pilate appeals to the crowds. Surely Jesus was a man of the people, and the people would speak for Him? That remains to be seen.

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, I yield to the way that I am fearfully and wonderfully made - to the uniqueness of my giftings, my personality, and my calling. I repent of envy and jealousy. Today I pray for those I have a tendency to compare myself to, and I ask for their fruitfulness and flourishing.

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 139:

For I formed your inward parts;

I knitted you together in your mother's womb.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Adapted from Psalm 139:13-14a (ESV 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.

March 31 2023 (click for audio)

Innocent or Guilty? Who Cares?

Today is Friday the 31st of March, and this week I continue to follow the way of Jesus, even though it is taking me to some dark and painful places.

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. (Adapted from John 8:12)

Rejoice and Reflect

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

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.

Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.

Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;
then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.

Unseal my lips, O Lord,
that my mouth may praise you.

Psalm 51:12-16 (NLT)

Pause and pray

Trying to spare Jesus, Pilate offers a way of escape. During the Feast of Passover, crowds were allowed the release of one prisoner. Would they choose the innocent or the guilty?

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him released for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "Crucify him." And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Mark 15:11-15 (ESV UK)

Public opinion is fickle. Just the week before, the crowds had been crying, 'Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' And now, spurred on by some twisted influencers, those same crowds call for Jesus' torture and death. This is cancel culture at its very worst.

Ask

Do I find myself swayed by public opinion? Influenced by those whose viewpoint does not line up with the values and culture of God's rule and reign?

Lord, I repent for the times I have blindly followed the crowd. Please help me to be discerning, and give me the courage to be the voice of dissent, if and when that is needed.

Pause and pray

Lord, I pray for the media in my country - for journalists and editors. I pray that they would report fairly and impartially, and not be swayed by public opinion or unrighteous motives. I choose a newsfeed or newspaper I often read and pray for those who produce it.

Pause and pray

Yield

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

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "Crucify him." And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Mark 15:11-15 (ESV UK)

These days it's not uncommon for people or organizations to be crucified in the court of public opinion, even before an impartial assessment or investigation. How might Jesus' example offer me another way to discern and to respond?

Pause and pray

Yielding Prayer

Lord, it's so easy to get swept up with the crowd. I yield to You my ears and eyes - to hear and to see what You hear and see. I yield my mind and my heart, to think and to feel what You do. May I do Your will always.

Yielding Promise

And now, as I prepare to take this time of prayer into the coming day, the Lord who loves me says in 1 Kings 3:

‘Because you have asked ... for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind.’

1 Kings 3:11-12 (ESV 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.