



LENTEN EXPERIMENT

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2016



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Lenten Experiment

Wednesday February 10 – Saturday March 19, 2015

INTRODUCING LENT

Lent is the period of 40 days preceding Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter – i.e. the start of Holy Week). It is a subdued time of repentance, reflection and discipline that commemorates Jesus' 40 days of fasting and trial in the desert (Matt. 4:1ff). Since at least the third century AD, it has been traditional to give up something pleasurable that is part of our everyday lives for the purpose of:

- Learning self-control and freeing our minds and hearts from material things,
- Remembering Christ's sufferings and our true pleasures, which are found in Him.
- Repenting of our wrongdoings and drawing near to God.

By giving up something we regularly enjoy or do, we remind ourselves of how easily we become attached to pleasure and habits, and we have the opportunity to re-focus our lives on God. Monks of the Franciscan order call this 'detachment' – the idea that the less that 'stuff' preoccupies our lives, the more room there is for God (and for ourselves and others). Furthermore, each time we reach for the pleasurable thing or habit that we have given up, we stop ourselves from doing so, and consciously remember that all of our true pleasures and needs are fulfilled by God.

It is also common during Lent to acquire new disciplines and habits. Thus we are not simply turning away from one thing to nothing or emptiness, rather we turn away from one thing and towards another soul-nurturing thing. The following excerpt from Robert Webber's *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), describes the movement and spirituality of Lent well.

A Time to Repent

Although we praise our common Lord for all kinds of reasons, we praise and glorify him above all for the cross. [Paul] passes over everything else that Christ did for our advantage and consolation and dwells incessantly on the cross. The proof of God's love for us, he says, is that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Then in the following sentence he gives us the highest ground for hope: If, when we were alienated from God, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life!

John Chrysostom (AD 347–407)

Unfortunately some Christians live as though the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ never happened. Our lives become absorbed in the day-to-day experiences of life. We focus on name-brand clothing, the color of our houses, the size of our bank account, the year and make of our automobile, the prestige in which others hold us, and the symbols of our own power. We too easily forget our Maker and Redeemer, replacing God with things and ambition. Lent is the season that does something about this situation.

It calls us back to God, back to basics, back to the spiritual realities of life. It calls on us to put to death the sin and the indifference we have in our hearts toward God and our fellow persons. And it beckons us to enter once again into the joy of the Lord—the joy of a new life born out of a death to the old life. This is what Ash Wednesday is all about—the fundamental change of life required of those who would die with Jesus and be raised to a new life in him. ...

... The purpose of the fast with the accompanying prayer and resulting almsgiving [giving money, time, ourselves] is not to accumulate works and gain favor in the eyes of God. Such a view is unbiblical and leads to legalism. Rather, the purpose of fasting is to establish, maintain, repair, and transform our relationship with God. For fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are means through which we express our spiritual pilgrimage during Lent, and through these means we experience the turning away from sin and conversion to Christ ordered by the spirituality of Lent.

Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are not only the acts of giving up something such as food, time, and money. It is also the activity of taking something on. When we give up a sin that has its grip on our lives, we need to replace it with a positive alternative. Our Lenten spirituality not only calls on us to turn away from a sin that holds us in its power but to turn toward a virtue that replaces our sin.

For example, fasting from food is a symbol of the discipline it takes to turn away from our sin. Prayer is the actual experience of turning to God in dependence. Almsgiving is the symbol of the virtue we are taking on to replace our sin. Consequently, it is of utmost importance for us to do the actual act of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving simultaneously with the turning away from a sin and turning toward a virtue. The two actions interlock with each other in such a way that success in one discipline corresponds with our achievement in the other. If we fail to keep the discipline of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, the chances of succeeding in overcoming our sin and transplanting it with a virtue are severely weakened.

How to Begin

For the period of the Lenten Experiment (Ash Wednesday – Palm Sunday), we are encouraging all participants to give up some habit or pattern, and to acquire a new spiritual discipline or healthy habit in its place. This easy-to-read article from Creighton University's "Praying Lent" website encourages us to go deep and choose something that will have profound effect on our lives in the long run.

Beyond Giving Up Chocolate: Going Deeper in Lent

From the time we were children, our first question for Lent was often, "What are you giving up for Lent?" Giving something up for these 40 days is a custom that, when we were younger, helped us enter into the season with a sense of purpose and a greater awareness.

As adults, we might want to consider looking at Lent in a deeper way. We are probably much more settled into our behaviors and patterns of life and sometimes giving up something is where we begin -- and end -- our reflections on Lent. It can be tempting to say "I am giving up chocolate" or beer or even all sweets and all alcohol. But without more reflection, it can become simply a way I show God how strong I am. It is more about me than any conversation with God.

Lent isn't simply about us "giving up" something. The real grace is when we recognize that Lent is a season in which God wants to *give us* something. God wants to help us transform our lives and make us more free as people -- not just freer with God, but in the way we live our lives and love our families.

It is much easier for us to simply choose something to give up -- then we can dismiss Lent! "I am giving up TV for Lent." "I am giving up movies... Snacks... Soda pop." We give it up and exercise our willpower for 40 days to prove to ourselves and to God that we can do it. And at the end of Lent we can return to what we gave up.

But this year we might reflect and ask the deeper question: What is God inviting me to change this Lent? How do I know what God might be stirring in me? I begin by listening to the movements in my heart. Where am I feeling uncomfortable with the choices I am making? With the things I have done? With the habitual ways I respond? The Lord will be speaking to me in those small nagging moments of discomfort in my heart.

It might be that we know deep down that we drink too much and that giving up alcohol would make us less irritable each night. Then giving up alcohol would be the right thing. Asking what we would like to change about ourselves this Lent requires a little reflection. What pattern of behavior in my life needs changing? What do I need *more of* in my life? Patience? Unselfishness? More loving behavior toward my spouse or children?

But each of us can think of something that gets in the way of our being loving and self-sacrificing. Too often the ordinary conflicts, divisions and difficulties in our family life result from simple selfishness on my part. I choose to fight. I choose to defend my opinion. I choose to use things I know about my partner, my children, my parents against them. I choose to hurt them.

The results of that behavior are never good and always divisive. We can imagine a Lenten practice in which each of us would tell members of our family -- those whom we have most offended in these ways -- that we are sorry and ask them to help us to work with us to bring more unity and peace to our family life.

We can ask: What would it cost me to change this behavior? What would it mean if I didn't walk around my family acting crabby all the time? What if I decided to be much more loving and patient with my spouse this Lent? What if I did decide to "give up" something really destructive in my life, like alcohol, pornography or on-line friendships? As I reflect, I might realize that changing a particular way I live is coming to me as a call from God and I don't have to do it alone. God is moving my heart to reflect on these changes and God will remain faithful and help me to stay open to the grace being offered to me for change.

I need help. It may be something that I don't *want* to change or acknowledge. I don't think I *can* change it. But that's where talking to God can make the difference. I am not doing this alone; I am doing it with God.

When I look at challenges with my spouse, I might discover that one of the barriers to communication in my marriage is that I interrupt and disagree. In some place in my head I know that is an annoying habit, but I am not free enough to simply listen without objecting. Maybe I am unable to receive what my spouse says without coming to the conclusion that my spouse is wrong. What if sharing a different point of view was not about winning an argument but to advancing communication between us?

In asking God for help, we might ponder one of the many healing gospels, like [Mark 2: 1-12](#). In this story, a group of friends carried a mat with a paralyzed man to Jesus, who was teaching inside a house. So many people crowded around the outside of the house that the friends were unable to get the mat inside. So

they went up to the roof and moved aside the tiles and lowered their friend on the mat to Jesus below. The words to this gospel say that the friends on the roof had “broken through” the tiles to lower their friend into the house for healing. Their breakthrough led directly to the healing.

Where do we need a breakthrough? What is the barrier that keeps us from asking for healing? In our own lives, we need to break through our denials, defensiveness and our unwillingness to look at ourselves. Discovering what the barrier is in my life is critical. If we don’t know what the barrier is, these weeks of Lent are a great time to reflect upon it. When we identify the barrier, we have made the breakthrough. That's when Jesus can heal us of it.

Why is this a good Lenten penance? Because it gets my attention where I live every day. It allows God’s grace into my soul and into the place where my real life exists. That's where Jesus stands with me every day, waiting for me to be lowered from the roof so he can touch me and heal me.

If you are not sure where to begin, considering these questions may help:

- What activities or habits do you want to purge from your daily life? What do you want to reduce?
- What types of activities do you do when you want to relax? Are they constructive or destructive?
- Do you hide from responsibility by filling your time with things to distract you?
- Do you have a bad habit from which you want to be freed?
- Do you ever feel ashamed about how much time, money, resources, mental space you give to a certain activity or habit?

As you consider what new practices or habits God would like you to acquire. These passages of scripture describing the virtues of a mature Christian may inspire you: Galatians 5:22-23 and Romans 12:9-21.

Overview of the Guide

In this manual, we have erred on the side of providing too much, rather than too little in order to direct you towards new disciplines and habits. We have done this knowing that everyone has different time constraints and schedules, and that you may not be able to do every activity each day. We have provided more activities to accommodate those who have more free time and those who finish the major activities quickly.

At the beginning of each week, you will find:

- A memory verse for the week
- An overview of group events available that week

With the exception of a few days, primary activities for each day of the week are as follows:

Sunday	Worship services; Contemplative Prayer. Plan & review your week.
Monday	Morning Prayer at UC, reflect on a reading.
Tuesday	Go for a walk and reflect on all that you encounter
Wednesday	Morning Prayer at UC (with communion), Reflect on a piece of art
Thursday	Reflect on a reading
Friday	Morning Prayer at UC, reflect on a piece of music
Saturday	Weekly reflection. Biography of a person of faith

We know this sounds like a lot! But this is not meant to make you a busier person, rather these are things that we hope will help you change your priorities. As such, we encourage everyone to make these minimum commitments:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Daily | Morning Prayer (shortly after you wake up)
General attentiveness to God throughout the day
Evening Prayer (shortly before you go to sleep) |
| Weekly | Completing at least a handful of the activities each week as your schedule permits
Attending Sunday worship with a heart ready to meet with God and others |

Please adapt activities to suit your needs, for example, if you are not able to attend a Morning Prayer at UC (every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7am), consider arranging a prayer time during your lunch break or a prayer phone call with a friend at a time that suits you.

General Principles

- Be intentional about how you spend your time.
- Do not rush through prayers, readings, and reflective times. Initial discomfort with silence, quiet, and reflection as we face our true selves is normal. It will ease over the course of the 40 days.
- Try to make extra time for your family and yourself during Lent (i.e. be less busy)
- Try to go to sleep earlier, and wake up 30 minutes earlier to do Morning Prayer.

Nurturing Your Soul

If you finish the primary activity of the day quickly and are tempted to return to old 'time-wasters' or bad habits, consider trying some of these soul-nurturing activities:

- cheerfully doing chores (remember the blessings behind them - having a home, food, clothes, etc.)
- share time with a friend or family member, talk, pray ...
- listen to good music
- practice the discipline of silence (solitude)
- exercise (maybe a simple walk), sit on a park bench
- read, spend time with someone, have a coffee, volunteer somewhere.
- have a tech free day (no computers, phones, TV, etc)
- play a game
- enjoy a nice meal
- take a long bath; have a nap
- be early for appointments and enjoy getting there
- smile and greet others through the day
- memorize a passage of Scripture (some ideas are given at the start of each week)

Listening to God

In this guide we encourage you to take time in your devotions and through the day to listen to God. It is impossible to cultivate a relationship with God without taking time to listen. Make space in your day for God to answer a simple prayer – “Lord, speak to me, I am listening”.

You can be attentive to His voice even as you get on with other things. In his book, *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard describes how he ‘listens’ to God.

Personally I find it works best if after I ask God to speak to me in this way, I devote the next hour or so to some kind of activity that neither engrosses my attention with other things nor allows me to be intensely focused on the matter in question. Housework, gardening, driving about on errands, or paying bills will generally do. I have learned not to worry about whether or not this is going to work. I know that it does not have to work, but I am sure that it will work if God has something he really wants me to know or do. This is ultimately because I am sure of how great and good he is.

Often by the end of an hour or so there has stood forth within my consciousness an idea or thought with that peculiar quality, spirit and content that I have come to associate with God’s voice. If so, I may write it down for further study. I also may decide to discuss the matter with others, usually without informing them that “God has told me...” Or I may decide to reconsider the matter by repeating the same process after a short period of time. Remember Gideon (Judges 6:11-40). Remember too that scientists check their results by rerunning experiments. We should be so humble.

(Hearing God, p. 199-200)

A Word of Encouragement

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Hebrews 12:1-2)

Week 1

Ash Wednesday February 10 – Saturday February 13

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.

Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Micah 6:6–8

(New King James Version)

- ⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD,
And bow myself before the High God?
 Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
 With calves a year old?
- ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
 Ten thousand rivers of oil?
 Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression,
 The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?
- ⁸ **He has shown you, O man, what *is* good;**
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

Planning Ahead – This Week's Events:

Ash Wednesday Services	Wed Feb 10, 7:00am and 7:00pm
Morning Prayer	Friday, 7:00 - 7:45 am
All Night Concert of Prayer	Fri Feb 12, 9:30pm-6:00am

Ash Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Isaiah 57:15-21
- Mark 2:13-22

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Penitence

From the Seasonal material for Lent, in Common Worship of the Church of England.

Most merciful God,
 Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 we confess that we have sinned in thought,
 word and deed.
 We have not loved you with our whole heart,
 and mind, and strength.
 We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
 We have not forgiven others, as we have been
 forgiven.
 Lord, have mercy.

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as
 Christ served us.
 We have not been true to the mind of Christ.
 We have grieved your Holy Spirit.
 Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you, Lord:

all our past unfaithfulness:
 the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our
 lives.
 Lord, have mercy.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways,
 and our exploitation of other people.
Lord, have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration
 and our envy of those more fortunate than
 ourselves.
Lord, have mercy.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and
 comforts
 and our dissatisfaction in daily life and
 work.
Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship
 and our failure to commend the faith that is
 in us.
Lord, have mercy.

Accept our repentance, Lord:

for the wrongs we have done,
for our blindness to human need and
suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgements,
for uncharitable thoughts towards our
neighbours
and for our prejudice and contempt towards
those who differ from us.
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation
and our lack of concern for those who come
after us.
Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord,
and let your anger depart from us.
Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.
Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
that we may show your glory in the world.
By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his
resurrection.

Silence.

We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as
ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

STRENGTH¹

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May the One who makes the crocus burst into bloom,
Who makes the lame leap like a deer
And the mute tongue shout for joy
Grant you the power together with all of the saints,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep
is the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge.

Scripture References

Isaiah 35:1, 6
Ephesians 3:18, 19

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

**Elliff, T. D. (1998). *A Passion for Prayer: Experiencing Deeper Intimacy with God* (pp. 197–204).
Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.**

From chapter 18: Praying for Genuine Revival.

¹ All benedictions in this format from: Vasholz, R. I. (2007). *Benedictions* (pp. 85–105). Geanies House, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

At the heart of genuine revival is repentance. Prayers of confession are harbingers of changed attitudes and lives. We readily acknowledge the necessity of repentance (turning away from sin) in salvation. But remember, our salvation is to be the pattern for the balance of our Christian life as well. “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6). Since repentant confession was fundamental to our salvation experience, it must also play an important part in our daily walk with Christ.

Every true child of God can rejoice in the eternal security of his or her relationship with Him. But sin drives a wedge in our fellowship with God. Therefore, all disobedience must be prayerfully confessed and rejected if the intimacy of that fellowship is to be maintained.

THE REALITY OF SIN IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE

The Bible is clear on the fact that God’s people are not immune to sin. Our struggle with wickedness is real, and the Bible pictures us as combatants in the arena of faith. Consider the lives of past great men of God. Noah’s faith qualified him to be the one man enlisted to provide a remnant after the Flood; yet he fell into sin after that great deliverance. Abraham, the great man of faith, was not untouched by sin; in fact, his ill-fated journey to Egypt produced a relationship out of which was born a nation that continually opposed God’s people. Moses, the heroic and faithful leader of the Israelites, brought them to the border of the Promised Land but was not permitted to enter in himself because of his sin. And David, the man after God’s own heart, had a secret sin that has been known around the world for over 2,000 years.

...

GOD’S RESPONSE TO SIN IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE

The Scriptures indicate that God deals with sin in believers’ lives through a series of three progressive and increasingly drastic steps: conviction, chastening, and, finally, the call home (“sin leading to death,” 1 John 5:16 [Note: This is the sin of refusing to receive salvation offered in Christ]).

God’s first response to our sin is to bring conviction to our hearts. To do this, the Holy Spirit employs the Word of God, which is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). God speaks to us through His Word about the sin in our lives. Just as a mirror reveals how we look to others, the Word of God reveals how we look to Him. The Holy Spirit uses the Word much like a sailor uses a compass, showing us where we have strayed from the course He has charted for our lives.

But suppose we make no course correction? What if we ignore the Spirit’s voice and do not confess and repent of our sin? God then begins the process of chastisement.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

—HEBREWS 12:5–11

Scripture plainly teaches that chastening (God's response to persistent sin) is so common for a believer that the failure to experience it indicates that an individual is not actually a child of God. ...

We must all beware of falling prey to sin, whether overt or more subtle. David saw presumptuous sin as a most serious matter. Listen to his plea: "Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression" (Ps. 19:13). We should remember that although David occasionally sinned greatly, when he was confronted by the prophet of God, his heart melted, and his spirit was broken.

God has committed Himself to deal with all sin in the believer's life. He may do it through conviction, chastening, or death. But above all, He wants us to turn away from sin so we can return to Him, come back to His table, and enjoy restored fellowship. Like the prodigal son, fellowship with our Father awaits us at the end of the road of repentance.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

- ☐ **Attend the Ash Wednesday services at University Chapel at 7.00am and 7:00pm.**
- ☐ If you haven't already, read the [introductory sections](#) of this guide as a way of preparing your heart and planning for the season of Lent. The ["How to Begin"](#) section in particular will help you with the next two items.
- ☐ Pray, asking the Lord to show you what habit, routine, or dependency He would like you to give up for the period of Lent.
- ☐ Pray, asking the Lord to show you what new practice He would like you to acquire. Record your commitments here.

My 2016 Lenten Commitments

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of a Nigerian Christian.

in. George Appleton (ed.), The Oxford book of Prayer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 107.

God in heaven,
 you have helped my life to grow like a tree.
 Now something has happened.
 Satan, like a bird,
 has carried in one twig of his own choosing after another.
 Before I knew it
 he had built a dwelling place and was living in it.
 Tonight, my Father,
 I am throwing out both the bird and the nest..
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:1-8

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.

-
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the feeblest among you be like David,
May the God who gives encouragement and endurance,
Give you the Spirit of unity as you follow Christ,
So that with one heart and one mouth we may together,
Glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture References

Zechariah 12:8

Romans 15:5, 6

Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read.

- Genesis 35:1-20
- Matthew 24:29-51

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

A Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Holy God, we confess that we have not lived as you have taught us.
 We have put our longing for money, success, or happiness
 above our desire for you and your kingdom.
 We worry about what others will think, what we wear,
 how our reputation can be polished.
 We make idols out of the winning record of a sports team,

the next promotion at work, the perfect family,
 the cleanliness of our house, or the latest technology.
 We are careless with our words, saying things we don't mean,
 things that are hurtful to our children or friends.
 We are so busy with our lives
 that we forget our every breath depends on you.
 While we waste our time on meaningless activities,
 we fail to recognize moments of grace throughout our day.
 We indulge in hateful thoughts against those we feel have offended us,
 and we are indifferent toward the suffering in our own neighbourhoods.
 We forget that all people bear your image.
 In an effort to look better, we compare ourselves to others.
 We take advantage of weakness and are passive in the face of injustice.
 For personal gain and reputation, we lie blatantly, and we lie by omission.
 We would rather blame others unjustly than accept fault.
 We long for what is not ours and begrudge the blessings of others.
 Forgive us for thinking of ourselves before others and before you.
 Free us from unreasonable expectations of ourselves and others,
 From the need to compete, and from loss of perspective
 so that we glorify you in all we think, say, and do.
 Amen.

Benediction

May that One whose love has no limit,
 Whose grace has no measure,
 Whose power has no boundary known unto men.
 May He from His infinite riches in Jesus,
 Send you help from His sanctuary and grant you His
 support from that heavenly Zion.

Scripture Reference

Psalms 20:2

Hymn Reference

'He Giveth More Grace' Annie J. Flint (1866–1932)

DAILY ACTIVITY – Artwork

Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, mosaic in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, c. 500 [overleaf]

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "And I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. – Matthew 4:18-20

This mosaic in Ravenna, Italy exemplifies the blend of Eastern with Western art styles typical to the time and place in which this basilica was constructed. The background and some other details are made from gold tiles. There is much detail and movement in this image, despite the difficult medium. Jesus is shown with a halo around his head and rich clothing of a contrasting colour to the other figures in the scene. The full net reminds us of the version of this story found in Luke's gospel.

1. Jesus saw immediately that Peter and Andrew would make good disciples. What does this tell you about God, how he sees you, and his call on your life?
2. Without hesitation, these two men left behind their home, friends and work to follow Jesus. How do you think you would have reacted in their place? How have you reacted when God has called you to a new role or situation in your life?
3. Why do you think Peter and Andrew were able to so easily follow Jesus on that day? When has it been easy to follow Jesus in your life? When has it been hard?



EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (AD 339-397)

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all,
 take away from me my sins,
 and mercifully kindle in me
 the fire of your Holy Spirit.
 Take away from me the heart of stone,
 and give me a heart of flesh,
 a heart to love and adore you,
 a heart to delight in you,
 to follow and enjoy you,
 for Christ's sake,
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 1:1-7

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE²

May the God who shouted,
 Moab is my washbasin,
 Upon Edom I toss my sandal,
 Over Philistia I shout in triumph.
 Lead you to always triumph in Christ
 And spread through you everywhere,
 The fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

Scripture References

Psalm 60:8

2 Corinthians 2:14

² All benedictions in this format from: Vasholz, R. I. (2007). *Benedictions* (pp. 85–105). Geanies House, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Genesis 39
- Matthew 25:1-30

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Penitence *(Adapted from Psalm 32)*

Happy is the person whose sins are forgiven,
whose wrongs are pardoned.
Happy is the person whom the LORD does not consider guilty
and in whom there is nothing false.

When I keep things to myself, I feel weak deep inside.
I moan all day long.
Day and night I feel your punishment on me.
My strength is gone as in the summer heat.
But when I confess my sins to you,
When I no longer hide my guilt.
When I say, "I will confess my sins to the LORD,"
you forgive my guilt.

For this reason, all who obey you should pray to you while they still can.
When troubles rise like a flood, they will not reach me.
You are my hiding place.
You protect me from my troubles
and fill me with songs of salvation.

O LORD, you have said,
"I will make you wise and show you where to go.
I will guide you and watch over you.
Let me not be like a horse or donkey, that doesn't understand.
They must be led with bits and reins, or they will not come near you."
Wicked people have many troubles,
but your love surrounds those who trust in you.

When I am good I rejoice with happiness in the LORD.
I will sing as one whose heart is right.
Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May your eyes see the king in his beauty
That you might view a land that stretches afar;
Like Abraham, who looked to a city,
Whose architect and builder is God.

Scripture References

Isaiah 33:17

Hebrews 11:10

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“Man of Sorrows” by Hillsong](#), performed by Big Valley Grace and consider the lyrics as you go about your day.

VERSE

Man of sorrows Lamb of God
By His own betrayed
The sin of man and wrath of God
Has been on Jesus laid

Silent as He stood accused
Beaten mocked and scorned
Bowing to the Father's will
He took a crown of thorns

CHORUS

Oh that rugged cross
My salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out
Hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

VERSE

Sent of heaven God's own Son
To purchase and redeem
And reconcile the very ones
Who nailed Him to that tree

BRIDGE

Now my debt is paid
It is paid in full
By the precious blood
That my Jesus spilled

Now the curse of sin
Has no hold on me
Whom the Son sets free
Oh is free indeed

VERSE

See the stone is rolled away
Behold the empty tomb
Hallelujah God be praised
He's risen from the grave

All-night Concert of Prayer, 9.30pm-6.00am

Continue to enrich your spiritual life by spending the night in prayer, worship and fellowship. We will pray for our church, our ministries, our neighbourhood and one another. Come, and be blessed.

Individual Prayer

If you cannot attend, spend an hour in prayer. If you are unsure how to begin, use the Lord's Prayer as your guide. Pray it one phrase at a time, and allow your personal prayers to flow out from that theme.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ○ "Our Father ..." | <i>Reflect on the intimacy we have with God.</i> |
| ○ "Hallowed be your name ..." | <i>Give praise to God, who is holy and great.</i> |
| ○ "Your Kingdom come ..." | <i>Invite God's kingdom reality into your life.</i> |
| ○ "Your will be done ..." | <i>Ask God to reveal his will and to empower you.</i> |
| ○ "Give us today our daily bread ..." | <i>Lift up your needs to God.</i> |
| ○ "Forgive us our sins ..." | <i>Confess your sins and struggles.</i> |
| ○ "As we forgive those who sin against us ..." | <i>Ask God to help you forgive and let go of hurt/anger.</i> |
| ○ "Lead us not into temptation ..." | <i>Ask God to reveal where you are weak or tempted.</i> |
| ○ "Deliver us from evil ..." | <i>Ask God to protect and help you in those areas.</i> |

Consider praying the Lord's Prayer for your family and friends as well.
Close with *"For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, Amen."*

EVENING PRAYER**COMPOSE**

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.
The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

-
- What was life-giving today?
 - When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
 - What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
 - What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Augustine (354 - 430)

(Bishop of Hippo.)

Look upon us, O Lord,
and let all the darkness of our souls
vanish before the beams of thy brightness.
Fill us with holy love,
and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom.
All our desire is known unto thee,
therefore perfect what thou hast begun,
and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.
We seek thy face,
turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory.
Then shall our longing be satisfied,
and our peace shall be perfect.
Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:9-16

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

And now to God's elect,
Whom He has upheld since they were conceived,
Carried since they were born,
Hear His good promise;
I am he; I will sustain you,
I will carry you,
I will rescue even to your old age.

Scripture Reference
Isaiah 46:3–4

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read.

- Genesis 41:1-40
- Matthew 25:31-46

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of St. John Chrysostom (349-407), Archbishop of Constantinople.

- Lord, accept me in penitence.
- Lord, leave me not.
- Lord, lead me not into temptation.
- Lord, grant me good thoughts.
- Lord, grant me tears and remembrance of mortality and contrition.

O Lord, grant me the thought of confessing my sins.
 O Lord, grant me humility, chastity and obedience.
 O Lord, grant me patience, courage and meekness.
 O Lord, plant in me the root of all blessings,
 the fear of you in my heart.
 O Lord, grant me to love you with all my mind and soul,
 and always to do your will.
 O Lord, protect me from certain people, and demons, and passions,
 and from every other harmful thing.
 O Lord, you know that you act as you will;
 may your will be also in me, a sinner.
 Blessed are you forever.
 Amen.

Benediction

Now to you from Him Who is, and Who was,
 and Who is to come ... from Jesus Christ,
 Who is the faithful witness,
 the firstborn from the dead
 and the ruler of the kings of the earth,
 May Grace and Peace abound.

Scripture Reference
Revelation 1:4, 5

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

DAILY ACTIVITY - Biography

BIOGRAPHY – Augustine of Hippo³

(354 – 430 AD)

ARCHITECT OF THE MIDDLE AGES

“Mankind is divided into two sorts: such as live according to man, and such as live according to God. These we call the two cities.... The Heavenly City outshines Rome. There, instead of victory, is truth.”

Barbarians surged into the empire, threatening the Roman way of life as never before. The Christian church also faced attack from internal heretics. The potential destruction of culture, civilization, and the church was more than an occasional nightmare—it was perceived as an immediate threat. And Augustine answered with such wisdom, his responses are still considered by some to be the church’s most important writings after the Bible.

Sex and fun

From his birth in a small North African town, Augustine knew the religious differences overwhelming the Roman Empire: his father was a pagan who honored the old Punic gods; his mother was a zealous

³ Galli, M., & Olsen, T. (2000). *131 Christians everyone should know* (pp. 20–23). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Christian. But the adolescent Augustine was less interested in religion and learning than in sex and high living—like joining with friends to steal pears from a neighbor’s vineyard “not to eat them ourselves but simply to throw them to the pigs.”

At age 17, Augustine set off to school in Carthage—the country boy in the jewel of North Africa. There the underachiever became enraptured with his studies and started to make a name for himself. He immersed himself in the writings of Cicero and Manichaeian philosophers and cast off the vestiges of his mother’s religion.

His studies completed, Augustine returned to his home town of Thagaste to teach rhetoric—and some Manichaeism on the side. (The philosophy, based on the teachings of a Persian named Mani, was a dualist corruption of Christianity. It taught that the world of light and the world of darkness constantly war with each other, catching most of humanity in the struggle.) Augustine tried to hide his views from his mother, Monica, but when she found out, she threw him out of the house.

But Monica, who had dreamt her son would become a Christian, continued to pray and plead for his conversion and followed him to Carthage when he moved there to teach. When Augustine was offered a professorship in Rome, Monica begged him not to go. Augustine told her to go home and sleep comfortably in the knowledge that he would stay in Carthage. When she left, he boarded a ship for Rome.

Darkness vanquished

After a year in Rome, Augustine moved again, to become the professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan. There he began attending the cathedral to hear the impressive oratory of Ambrose the bishop; he kept attending because of Ambrose’s preaching. He soon dropped his Manichaeism in favor of Neoplatonism, the philosophy of both Roman pagans and Milanese Christians.

His mother finally caught up with him and set herself to find her son a proper wife. Augustine had a concubine he deeply loved and who had given him a son, but he would not marry her because it would have ruined him socially and politically.

Added to the emotional strain of forsaking his lover and the shift in philosophies, Augustine was struggling with himself. For years he had sought to overcome his fleshly passions and nothing seemed to help. It seemed to him that even his smallest transgressions were weighted with meaning. Later, writing about the pear stealing of his youth, he reflected, “Our real pleasure consisted in doing something that was forbidden. The evil in me was foul, but I loved it.”

One afternoon, he wrestled anxiously about such matters while walking in his garden. Suddenly he heard a child’s sing-song voice repeating, “Take up and read.” On a table lay a collection of Paul’s epistles he’d been reading; he picked it up and read the first thing he saw: “Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, spend no more thought on nature and nature’s appetites” (Romans 13:13–14).

He later wrote, “No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

From monk to bishop

Augustine’s conversion sent shockwaves through his life. He resigned his professorship, dashed off a note to Ambrose telling of his conversion, and retreated with his friends and mother to a country villa in Cassiciacum. There he continued discussing philosophy and churning out books in a Neoplatonist vein. After half a year, he returned to Milan to be baptized by Ambrose, then headed back to Thagaste to live as a writer and thinker.

By the time he reached his home town (a journey lengthened by political turmoil), he had lost his mother, his son, and one of his closest friends. These losses propelled Augustine into a deeper, more vigorous commitment: he and friends established a lay ascetic community in Thagaste to spend time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures.

In 391, Augustine traveled to Hippo to see about setting up a monastery in the area. His reputation went before him. The story goes that, seeing the renowned layman in church one Sunday, Bishop Valerius put aside his prepared sermon and preached on the urgent need for priests in Hippo. The crowd stared at Augustine and then pushed him forward for ordination. Against his will, Augustine was made a priest. The laity, thinking his tears of frustration were due to his wanting to be a bishop rather than priest, tried to assure him that good things come to those who wait.

Valerius, who spoke no Punic (the local language), quickly handed over teaching and preaching duties to his new priest, who did speak the local language. Within five years, after Valerius died, Augustine became bishop of Hippo.

Orthodox champion for a millennium

Guarding the church from internal and external challenges topped the new bishop's agenda. The church in North Africa was in turmoil. Though Manichaeism was already on its way out, it still had a sizable following. Augustine, who knew its strengths and weaknesses, dealt it a death blow. At the public baths, Augustine debated Fortunatus, a former schoolmate from Carthage and a leading Manichaean. The bishop made quick work of the heretic, and Fortunatus left town in shame.

Less easily handled was Donatism, a schismatic and separatist North African church. They believed the Catholic church had been compromised and that Catholic leaders had betrayed the church during earlier persecutions. Augustine argued that Catholicism was the valid continuation of the apostolic church. He wrote scathingly, "The clouds roll with thunder, that the house of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth; and these frogs sit in their marsh and croak 'We are the only Christians!'"

In 411 the controversy came to a head as the imperial commissioner convened a debate in Carthage to decide the dispute once and for all. Augustine's rhetoric destroyed the Donatist appeal, and the commissioner pronounced against the group, beginning a campaign against them.

It was not, however, a time of rejoicing for the church. The year before the Carthage conference, the barbarian general Alaric and his troops sacked Rome. Many upper-class Romans fled for their lives to North Africa, one of the few safe havens left in the empire. And now Augustine was left with a new challenge—defending Christianity against claims that it had caused the empire's downfall by turning eyes away from Roman gods.

Augustine's response to the widespread criticism came in 22 volumes over 12 years, in *The City of God*. He argued that Rome was punished for past sins, not new faith. His lifelong obsession with original sin was fleshed out, and his work formed the basis of the medieval mind. "Mankind is divided into two sorts," he wrote. "Such as live according to man, and such as live according to God. These we call the two cities.... The Heavenly City outshines Rome. There, instead of victory, is truth."

One other front Augustine had to fight to defend Christianity was Pelagianism. Pelagius, a British monk, gained popularity just as the Donatist controversy ended. Pelagius rejected the idea of original sin, insisting instead that the tendency to sin is humankind's own free choice. Following this reasoning, there is no need for divine grace; individuals must simply make up their minds to do the will of God. The church excommunicated Pelagius in 417, but his banner was carried on by young Julian of Eclanum. Julian took potshots at Augustine's character as well as his theology. With Roman snobbery, he argued that Augustine and his other low-class African friends had taken over Roman Christianity. Augustine argued with the former bishop for the last ten years of his life.

In the summer of 429, the Vandals invaded North Africa, meeting almost no resistance along the way. Hippo, one of the few fortified cities, was overwhelmed with refugees. In the third month of the siege, the 76-year-old Augustine died, not from an arrow but from a fever. Miraculously, his writings survived the Vandal takeover, and his theology became one of the main pillars on which the church of the next 1,000 years was built.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER
COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

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- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
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- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

A Prayer of St Apollonius,

(Illustrious Roman nobleman, martyred in 185 AD. Defended his faith before an antagonistic Roman Senate)

O Lord Jesus Christ,
 give us a measure of your Spirit
 that we may be enabled
 to obey your teaching:
 to pacify anger,
 to take part in pity,
 to moderate desire,
 to increase love,
 to put away sorrow,
 to cast away vanity,
 not to be vindictive,
 not to fear death;
 ever entrusting our spirit to the immortal God
 who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns
 world without end.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 1:8-19

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Lord guide you always;
May you be like a well-watered garden,
Like a spring whose waters never fail.
When you cry for help, may the Lord always say,
'Here am I'

Scripture Reference

Isaiah 58:9, 11

Week 2

Sunday February 14 – Saturday February 20

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.
Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Ephesians 2:1–5

(Today's New International Version)

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ **But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.**

Planning Ahead – This Week's Events:

Worship Services	.....	Sun Feb 14, 10am and 7pm
Morning Prayer	.....	Mon / Wed / Fri, 7-7:45am

Whom would you like to serve or spend time with? Plan and arrange the details.

Sunday

MORNING PRAYER

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is the ancient practice of opening our whole being – body, mind and spirit – to an awareness of God’s abiding presence. It is quiet but active, restful but attentive, intentional but not goal-oriented. It is making real in our experience God’s love “poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5)

It takes practice and patience and cannot be pursued as another spiritual milestone. It is a life-practice where the fruit is often experienced outside of the practice itself. Just a physical exercise may be tough in the doing, and yet we carry the benefits with us through our day, so is contemplative (or centering) prayer. Have no goal in mind. It may feel like nothing has happened. It takes a lot of practice and patience. Persevere. Simply showing up already expresses a desire for God and He will respond to your invitation.

Silence is a significant part of contemplative prayer. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). There is a hearing and seeing beyond words as we find release in opening up our unconscious mind and the depth of our souls to God.

Planning & Preparation:

- Plan initially for 15-20 minutes. (It’s a good idea to set a timer and then forget about the clock).
- Sit up straight with body relaxed, or kneel with body supported. Choose a posture that will not distract you (too uncomfortable) or make you doze off (too comfortable).
- Be in a quiet space without distractions.
- Consider having a ‘sacred’ object (cross, Bible, photo, icon, etc) in easy view. It may be helpful.

The Exercise:

1. Choose a ‘sacred’ word or phrase.
 - a. In a short time of prayer ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sacred word or phrase.
 - b. Use one that readily comes to mind (don’t search for the “perfect” one). Examples: “joy”, “good shepherd”, “grace”, “comforter”, “prince of peace”, “forgiven”, “with you always”, “Lamb of God”.
2. Softly speak your sacred word or phrase and then be still.
 - a. Dwell in God’s presence.
 - b. Fellowship in presence not talk. (Like enjoying a view with a friend.)
3. Abide. Let God’s presence touch you.
 - a. Let normal thoughts and feelings come. Don’t try to ‘empty’ your mind, but don’t let a particular thought take over.
 - b. Feel your soul letting go. (Do not go searching for thoughts or feelings.) Wait. Rest.
 - c. Let Jesus lift any weight off your soul – fear, frustration, disappointment, desire, sadness, loneliness, anger, . . . Give it over. (Do not analyze, rationalize or sentimentalize.)

-
- d. Enjoy, don't strive. Let joy and peace in. Smile at good thoughts and feelings.
 - e. Let go of tightness in your face and body. Breathe rhythmically. Release your limbs. Let God's peace spread to your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs, ...
 - f. If you doze, or your thoughts wander unhelpfully, return gently with your sacred word. (Don't use it repetitively like a mantra.)
 - g. If images crowd your mind look at your sacred object and slow your mind. Be attentive.
 - h. Experience gentleness. Receive grace. (Like enjoying a gentle breeze, or the warmth of a bath.)

4. When the timer rings, end by thoughtfully praying the Lord's Prayer.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10AM & 7PM

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

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- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Jerome (342-420)

(Priest and theologian. Translated the Bible into Latin)

O good shepherd, seek me out,
and bring me home to thy fold again.
Deal favourably with me according to thy good pleasure,

till I may dwell in thy house all the days of my life,
and praise thee forever and ever
with them that are there.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:17-24

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

Hear the word of the Lord,
In favor I will show you compassion,
So that men may bring you the wealth of nations,
In favor I will enlighten the eyes of your heart,
That you might fully understand the hope to which
He called you, even the glorious inheritance of the
saints.

Scripture References

Isaiah 61:6

Ephesians 1:18

Monday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Genesis 42
- Matthew 26:1-30

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Dr. Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

(Baptist Pastor. Human Rights Activist. Martyr)

Thou Eternal God,
 out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence
 the whole universe has come into being,
 we humbly confess that we have not loved thee
 with our hearts, souls and minds,
 and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us.
 We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses
 rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ.
 We often give in order to receive.
 We love our friends and hate our enemies.
 We go the first mile but dare not travel the second.
 We forgive but dare not forget.
 And so as we look within ourselves,
 we are confronted with the appalling fact that the history of our lives
 is the history of an eternal revolt against you.
 But thou, O God, have mercy upon us.
 Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be.
 Give us the intelligence to know your will.
 Give us the courage to do your will.
 Give us the devotion to love your will.
 In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May our God who called Abraham when he was but
one,
And blessed him and made him many,
Show you the incomparable riches of his grace,
That you might know you are His workmanship,
To do good works, which God has prepared in advance for
us to do.

Scripture References

Isaiah 51:2

Ephesians 2:7, 10

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

DAILY ACTIVITIES - READING

Newbigin, L. (2011). *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (pp. 150–152). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock

From chapter 5: Living for God.

Those who are seeking to restate the Christian message for a secularized society speak very frequently of the need for a kind of discipleship which is above all involved in the life of the world. ‘Involvement’ is now almost the primary virtue. By contrast the word ‘religion’ is tacitly identified with an activity which turns away from the world, abandoning it in favour of another realm where alone satisfaction is to be found. Traditional language about prayer and worship is suspect, lest it prove to be an escape from the real business of Christian living. The Church is held to be at its best when it is a filling station for the next lap of the course, and private prayer is seen as a sort of gathering together of the faculties for the next encounter with the world.

Let it be repeated that there are good reasons for this suspicion of ‘religion’. There is plenty of religion in the world which is indeed an escape from reality, and the pagan heart of man, in all ages and places, has always a tendency to hanker after it. The fact that an activity is religious, is pious in the sense of the great traditions of human religion, by no means guarantees that it is concerned with reality. Religious practice can be the place where our escape from reality, our hypocrisy and our sheer selfishness are at their maximum.

But what matters is the standpoint from which our criticism of religion is mounted. ‘The world’ is not a tenable standpoint. The only possible standpoint is that of faith in Christ, in whom alone both God and the world are made known as they are. Here Dietrich Bonhoeffer has said the decisive word: ‘A life in genuine worldliness is possible only through the proclamation of Christ crucified; true worldly living is not possible or real in contradiction to the proclamation or side by side with it, that is to say in any kind of autonomy of the secular sphere; it is possible and real only “in, with, under” the proclamation of Christ.’ It is only in the presence of Christ, the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord, that we can speak truly about the world or be truly involved in it. In and through Christ alone do we know the world as it truly is, created in God’s love, alienated from God’s love, redeemed and renewed by God’s love. True Christian involvement in the world is a life lived in the world in responsibility to him who is its Lord, and this responsibility means responding to him who has first acted, answering him who has first spoken, loving

him who has first loved. It is responsibility to *him* who alone is worthy of our total self-giving. Without this supernatural reference, the programme of 'involvement' can only become that conformity to the world which is death. In pagan terms, the antithesis 'sacred' and 'worldly' may be valid. But in these terms, neither the world nor God is known. The only standpoint given to us from which we may know both God and the world, the only basis, therefore, for a true criticism of religion, is Jesus Christ the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord, in whom, as St Paul says, 'the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world'. In Christ the Christian learns both to deny and to affirm the world—to deny it in its self-sufficiency, to affirm it as the object of God's love. But this paradoxical unity of denial and affirmation is only possible from within a relationship of responsibility to him who is not of the world, to the Lord whose the world is because he is its creator and its redeemer. Apart from this communion with God, talk of holy worldliness will become utterly shallow.

The communion of the Christian with God is centred in the corporate worship of the Christian community, in which Christ's redeeming work is set forth in word and sacrament, and the believing community responds in worship, prayer, and oblation. In one sense this Christian worship might be described as a secular, this-worldly affair. Speaking, washing, eating, drinking—all these are secular activities. What is offered in worship is the ordinary life of the community, its daily work and its worldly wealth. But 'in, with and under' these things, the Christian is brought to the place where he offers what he can offer to no human being and to no secular institution—the unconditional surrender of his will and the unlimited adoration of his heart and mind. The meaning of Christian worship is set before us once and for all in the vision of the Apocalypse where the events of the secular world in which the seer lives are seen in the setting of the worship of the whole creation, of the throne of God set in heaven surrounded by a sea of glass like crystal, of a glory and majesty before which he can only fall prostrate in utter adoration. This worship of the living God, of him who sits upon the throne, of the Lamb slain standing in the midst of the throne, is the very centre of the Christian life. A pattern of discipleship from which it had been removed would not be in any recognizable sense Christian.

But, let it be said again, this worship of the living God as he has made himself known to us in Christ must be guarded against assimilation to pagan ways of worship which deny the reality of the incarnation and the atonement. Worship which draws men's minds away from concern with the doing of God's will in the world into an exclusive concern for the blessedness of the worshippers is pagan worship. It must be denounced in the name of the incarnate Lord. Christian worship does not direct our thoughts away from the world; it directs them to him who has come to the world. The very heart of it is the act of humble and thankful adoration of him who 'for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven ...'. It is in that act of divine grace that Christian worship finds its focus of attention, and it is precisely that act which gives the world its value. If we have to reject a pagan conception of worship which draws men's thoughts away from the world, we must also reject a formulation of Christian belief, and consequently a conception of Christian worship which removes attention from that act of God, that mighty deed done for us by one who is not ourselves but Another. It is just in that otherness, in that divine transcend-dance (if we must use such language), without which it would be meaningless to say 'God so loved the world ...' that there lies both the motive for Christian worship, and the safeguard against a worship which tries to escape from the world. If we were wholly robbed of *that* assurance of the transcendent, if we were really to try to direct worship to 'the ground of our being', apart from the faith that he who is the ground of our being is also he who came for us, died for us, rose for us and calls us into his fellowship, then indeed we should be on the road to paganism.

This may seem a harsh word, but I think it is justified by the way in which the subject of prayer is handled in some of the recent restatements of the Christian faith for secular men. If one thing is clear about the teaching and practice of Jesus, it is that prayer was a profound reality for him and that he expected it to be such for his followers. And in the teaching of Jesus prayer is not a conversation with oneself. It is not a soliloquy. It is not meditation in the sense in which pagan religion is accustomed to

that exercise. It is an activity which involves two parties, the one who prays and the one to whom prayer is addressed. It is the child talking to the Father, asking him for what is needed, thanking him for what he is and has done, trusting him to do what is good. It is possible because the Father has revealed himself as one who loves men to the uttermost. This love of God, this accessibility to the petitions of his children, is not something discovered from a study of the world, or deducible from the nature of man. It is revealed in his acts. The response to the revelation includes believing prayer, and the more a man is committed to doing the will of God in the world, the more he will know the need to pray. Indeed he will know that the deepest meaning of his deeds is simply that they are, to use Schweitzer's phrase, acted prayers for the coming of God's kingdom. Anyone who knows what it is to live a life of responsible action in the world, praying each day for the doing of God's will, asking boldly for what is needed for each day's tasks, looking eagerly for the answers to his prayers, and, in Bonhoeffer's phrase, 'delivering up himself and his deed to God' each day, one who knows the adventure of this living discipleship—a man, in short, who knows what it is to trust the promises of the Gospel in this matter, will certainly not accept in its place the monologue of communion with himself. Prayer in the name and the spirit of Jesus, prayer patterned on his prayer, is no escape from the work of the world. It is the living heart of responsible dealing with the world.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St Aethelwold. (908-984)

(Nobleman. Monk. Bishop of Winchester.)

May God the Father bless us;
 may Christ take care of us;
 the Holy Ghost enlighten us all the days of our life.
 The Lord be our defender
 and keeper of body and soul,
 both now and forever, to the ages of ages.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 1:20-27

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

And now may He grace you with his presence,
So that the weak might say, 'I am strong',
And the poor will say, 'I am rich',
And the feeble will say, 'I am upheld'.

Scripture References

Joel 3:10

Isaiah 35:3

2 Corinthians 6:10

Tuesday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Genesis 44
- Matthew 26:31-56

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of a young Ghanaian Christian.

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 153.

On your last days on earth
 you promised to leave us the Holy Spirit as our present comforter.
 We also know that your Holy Spirit blows over this earth.
 But we do not understand him.
 Many think he is only wind or a feeling.
 Let your Holy Spirit break into our lives.
 Let him come like blood into our veins,

so that we will be driven entirely by your will.
 Let your Spirit blow over wealthy Europe and North America,
 so that men there will be humble
 Let him blow over the poor parts of the world,
 so that men there need suffer no more.
 Let him blow over Africa,
 so that men here may understand what true freedom is.
 There are a thousand voices and spirits in this world,
 but we want to hear only your voice,
 and be open only to your Spirit.
 Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord your God be to you a safe retreat
 In troubled times, a stronghold and refuge when you are
 oppressed,
 So that you can say, I will be glad and rejoice in you,
 I will sing praise to your name O Most High.

Scripture Reference

Psalm 9:9, 2

Hymn Reference

O Lord Most High, with all my Heart, Edward Miller (1735–1807);
 TH p. 48

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the World Around You

*Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil;
 and whatever one has taught or the other has learned
 has come from God - the Teacher of the teacher.*
 - Tertullian, 2nd c.

Go for a walk today and spend time appreciating everything that you encounter. Thank God for the beauty of creation, pray for the people you see, for the neighbourhood, and for our city.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

A Prayer of John Calvin (1509-1564)

(French Reformation theologian, based mainly in Geneva)

Lord, save us from being self-centred in our prayers
and teach us to remember to pray for others.
May we be so bound up in love with those for whom we pray,
that we may feel their needs as acutely as our own,
and interceded for them with sensitivity,
with understanding and with imagination.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:25-32

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May he who builds his lofty palace in the heavens
And sets its foundation on the earth,
Who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out over the face of the land
Grant you an awareness of His love that you may be always
joyful,
praying continually and giving thanks in all circumstances
For this is the will of God for you.

Scripture References

Amos 9:6

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Genesis 45:16-46
- Matthew 26:57-75

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960).

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.

[Adapted into contemporary English]

O God my creator and redeemer,
 may I not go forth today except you accompany me with your blessing.
 Let not the vigour and freshness of the morning,
 or the glow of good health,
 or the present prosperity of my undertakings,
 deceive me into a false reliance upon my own strength.
 All these good gifts come to me from you.
 They were yours to give and they are yours also to curtail.
 They are not mine to keep; but I hold them in trust;
 and only in continued dependence upon you, the Giver,
 can they be worthily enjoyed.

Let me then put back into your hand all that you have given me,
 rededicating to your service all the powers of my mind and body,
 all my worldly goods, all my influence with other men.
 All these, O Father, are yours to use as you will.
 All these are yours, O Christ.
 All these are yours, O holy Spirit.
 Speak in my words today, think in my thoughts, and work in all my deeds.
 And seeing that it is your gracious will to make use
 even of such weak human instruments
 in the fulfillment of your mighty purpose for the world,

let my life today be the channel
through which some little portion of your divine love and pity
may reach the lives that are nearest to my own.

In your solemn presence, O God,
I remember all my friends and neighbours,
my fellow townsfolk, and especially the poor within our gates,
beseeching you that you would give me grace,
so far as in me lies, to serve them in your name.

O blessed Jesus, who did use your own most precious life
for the redemption of your human brethren,
giving no thought to ease or pleasure or worldly enrichment,
but filling up all your hours and days with deeds of self-denying love,
give me grace today to follow the road you first have trodden;
and to your name be all the glory and the praise,
even unto the end.
Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Now may God grant you such that you may say like the
psalmist,
You are my hiding place; you protect me from all trouble
And surround me with songs of deliverance.
So that your work is produced by faith,
Your labor is prompted by love,
and your endurance is inspired by hope in our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Scripture References

Psalms 32:7

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Ask God to speak to you and be attentive through the day.

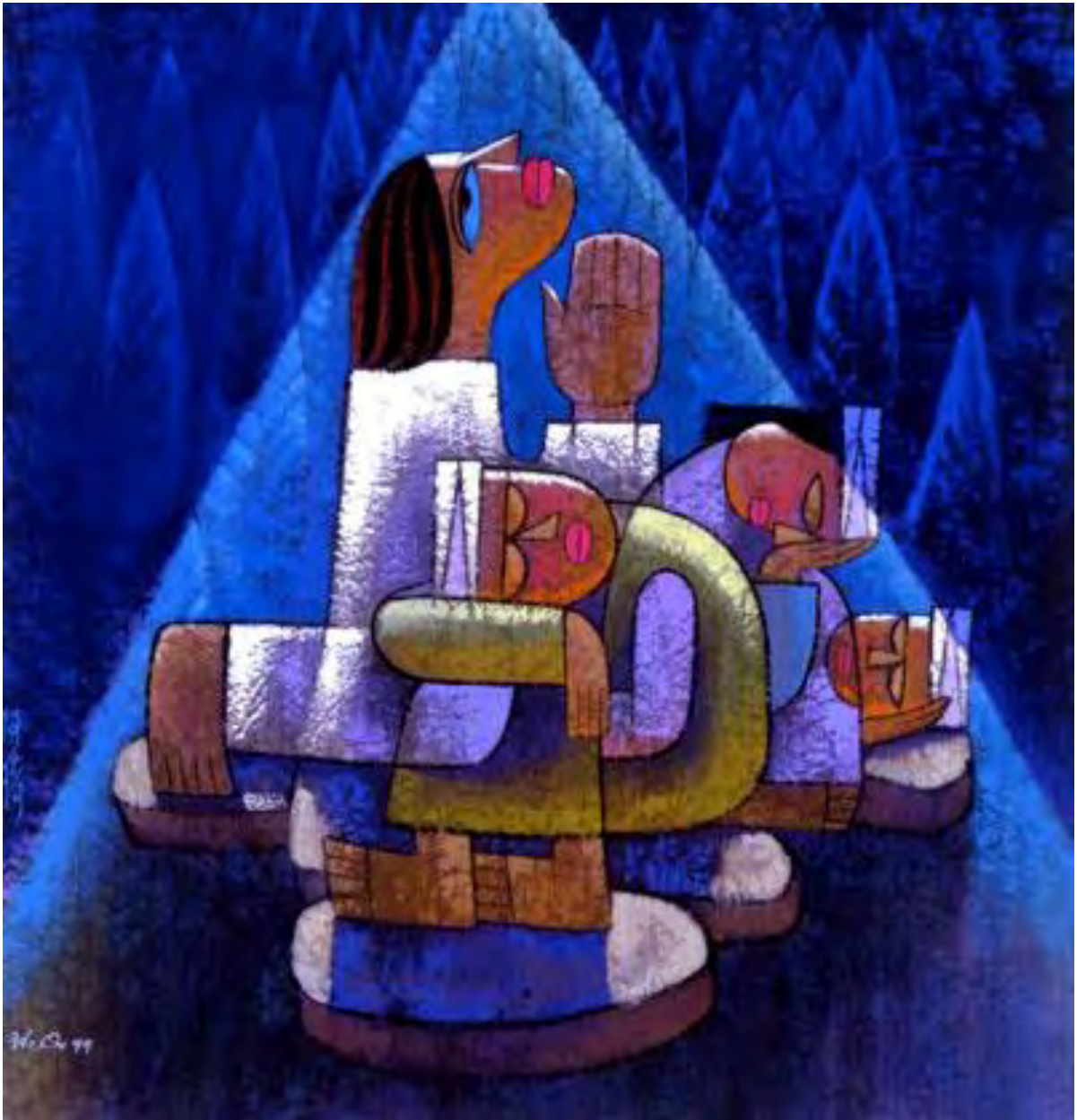
DAILY ACTIVITY - ARTWORK

He Qi, *Christ Praying at Gethsemane*, ink & gouache on rice paper, 1999

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. – Luke 22:39-43

The sleeping disciples are painted directly beside Jesus. Their rounded, dozing postures make a stark contrast to the alert and upright posture of the praying Jesus. The figures are all bathed in a light from above, representing Christ's communion with his heavenly father at this moment. Although we know that

Jesus was in turmoil at this time, a sense of calm permeates the image thanks to a blue background and still figures.



1. This painting gives us an intimate look at Jesus as he prepares to sacrifice himself for us. Meditate on the magnitude of this willing sacrifice.
2. Although Jesus is surrounded by his disciples, he is very alone in this painting. When have you felt alone, abandoned, or betrayed by those closest to you? Did you turn to God at this time?
3. Can you relate to the sleeping disciples? When have you felt like you let others down? When have you felt like you let God down?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Jerome (342 – 420)

(Priest and theologian. Translated the Bible into Latin)

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word
for a light to shine upon our path;
grant us so to meditate on that Word,
and to follow its teaching,
that we may find in it the light
that shines more and more until the perfect day;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 1:28-33

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the God who did not spare His own Son,
But sent Him to gladly bear our burden on the Cross.
Remind you always of these things,
though you know them and are firmly established in the
truth, until you arrive to a full measure of glory.

Scripture Reference

2 Peter 1:12

Hymn Reference

How Great Thou Art, Stuart K. Hine; TH p. 44

Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Genesis 47:13-31
- Matthew 27:1-26

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of George Appleton (1902 – 1993).

(Archbishop of Perth. Archbishop of Jerusalem)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

A Spirit of God, brooding over the formless world:

Brood over my spirit.

O Spirit of God, form to the formless:

Fashion my spirit

O Spirit of God, bringing order out of chaos:

Order my spirit.
 O Spirit of God, giving life to the lifeless:
 Give life to my spirit.
 O Spirit of God, inspiration of the prophets:
 Speak to my spirit.
 O Holy Spirit, author of holiness:
 Sanctify my spirit.
 O Holy Spirit, knowing the deep things of God:
 Move in the depths of my being.

Fire of the Spirit! Burn all that is not holy.
 Fire of the Spirit! Shine with thy light.
 Fire of the Spirit! Kindle with thy warmth.
 Fire of the Spirit! Generate in us power.
 Fire of the Spirit! In flame us with love.

Wind of the Spirit! Breathe in us thy gentleness.
 Wind on the Spirit! Blow in thy strength.

Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord grant you to see where you are lacking,
 that you might have everything;
 May He grant you a vision of your poverty,
 that you might be rich beyond measure,
 May He show you that you are destitute
 so that you may be filled with fullness of His supply.

Scripture Reference
Philippians 3:8

DAILY ACTIVITY - READING

Bloesch, D. G. (2002). *The Church: sacraments, worship, ministry, mission* (pp. 135–140). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

From chapter 7: Worship in Spirit and in Truth. Appendix A – Contemporary Worship.

A new style of worship has taken hold in many churches, both conservative and liberal. The Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, with its user-friendly services, is only one example of a growing trend in worship. Lyle Schaller hails the new mood for its elevation of the “spontaneous and visual” and its “freeing the preacher from the pulpit.” He also commends it for replacing “worship” with “celebration.” There is some evidence that the new style is attracting suburban families in particular, but how lasting its impact will be is another question. The principal issue we must deal with is whether so-called contemporary worship is unwittingly compromising the truth of the gospel.

Methodist pastor Craig Rice of Hamilton, Ohio, voices this complaint:

What is so often missing from much of contemporary worship is a sense of the beauty, the blessing, and the being of God... As long as the church continues to confuse the hunger for God, extant in every human heart, with the same yearnings that drive a market culture and a consumerist society, its worship will remain irrelevant at best, and an outright impediment at worst. As long as the church insists on serving up “Twinkies,” even new and improved ones, many of those once-churched-now-unchurched will continue to seek their bread in the world at large.

Michael Horton sees in contemporary worship a desire to control the movement of the Spirit, and in this respect it reproduces the failings of a hypertraditionalism.

Proponents of contemporary worship are remarkably like their critics. The difference is that they think they have God in their control by negating everything the traditionalist holds dear. They too seem to believe that their novel forms are the keys that unlock the Holy Spirit’s gilded imprisonment in classical idioms. They believe that by not uttering specific words, by not using classic hymns or choral arrangements, by not following any particular structure or pattern, their spontaneity and honesty will be rewarded by the Spirit. They have made themselves “open” and “available” by getting rid of written prayers, learned sermons, richly biblical hymns and formal opportunities for public confession, Scripture reading, and the declaration of forgiveness.

My attitude toward contemporary worship is decidedly more reserved than supportive, though I see some redeeming qualities. I am perturbed by suggestions that “pulpits, altars, and even crosses be removed” as “barriers to seekers’ faith.” The specter of heterodoxy arises when cultural appeal takes precedence over biblical fidelity, when the desire for novelty in worship is accompanied by a disdain for tradition. Form and spontaneity must both be present in a worship that seeks to be biblically faithful as well as culturally relevant. But when the accent is on the latter, the danger arises that the new wineskins will be holding the new wine of the culture rather than the new wine of the gospel. The Holy Spirit may be working in the new styles of worship, but we must not close our eyes to the possibility that evil spirits may also be at work turning people from a passion for the gospel to a passion to be accepted by the surrounding society.

Salient Marks

While contemporary worship is marked by considerable diversity, there are features that give it a semblance of commonality. Among these is eros spirituality, the desire to possess the highest good. This is especially evident in so-called contemporary music in which love is portrayed in terms of passion and longing for God. Whereas the great hymns of the church were characterized by adoring love, the new emphasis is on sentimental or passionate love. This is why we are encouraged in some of these songs to “fall in love” with God. Even though much attention is given to the praise of God, the motivation tends to be egocentric—the satisfaction of the heart’s desire. This is strikingly apparent in the praise song “As the Deer”:

I want You more than gold or silver,
only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy giver
and the apple of my eye.

Again contemporary worship is marred by an excessive individualism. The paradigm is the solitary individual in union with God. New style worship is concerned not with the people of God who unite their voices in a tribute of gratitude and adoration to God, but with the seeker after God who aspires to rise above the pressures and trials of living in the world in order to be lost in wonder, love and praise.

The focus of contemporary worship is not on content but on method. The aim is to create the right mood rather than to teach revealed truth. The praise choruses often take the form of mantras in which there is extended repetition of certain phrases (such as “Lord We Praise You” or “Our God Reigns”), which are designed to calm the soul rather than to enlighten the mind.

The sermons for the most part are practical rather than theological or doctrinal. Scriptural texts may be used, but they prove to be only points of departure for discourses on themes that pertain to daily living. Typical sermon topics are “What the Bible Says About Friendship” and “Ways to Draw Near to God.”

A common description of the worship service is that it is “user-friendly,” meaning that it is easy to learn. It makes few demands on the celebrants other than rising and sitting. It is designed not so much for those who already believe as for those who are seeking. It neglects the biblical truth that we can seek only through the power that comes by hearing the gospel. To try to correlate the Christian faith with the seeking of the natural person is bound to result in a compromised gospel.

The music that enlivens the services does not readily lend itself to congregational singing. It often takes the form of solos and ensembles. In short it is an elitist music. The congregants for the most part remain spectators even though they may join in singing the praise choruses. New style worship is essentially a performance; the congregation is generally passive, assuming the role of onlookers who add to the air of theatricality by providing applause.

In contrast to much traditional worship, the emphasis is not on the story of salvation but on cultivating intimacy with God. It is not on obedience to God’s will but on the experience of God’s presence. The search for ecstasy takes precedence over the cost of discipleship. When discipleship is talked about, the reference is usually not to the model of the suffering servant but to that of the possibility thinker. Being a disciple is how one finds happiness and fulfillment.

Modern Protestantism is faced with a paradigm shift of immense proportions. The key sacrament is no longer the Word or even the eucharist but the inward experience. The important thing is what goes on in the depths of the soul, not what is unfolded from the biblical text. Feeling takes priority over hearing. In many cases, particularly when special music is presented, one has difficulty in hearing the words because of the raucous beat of the drums and tambourines. But the words are not that significant; it is the mood that is the crucial element in the new worship paradigm.

While contemporary worship has the appearance of spontaneity, the forms that it spawns soon become inflexible and sacrosanct. The dances that are performed by selected persons are carefully rehearsed. This is in contrast to the dances in mainstream Pentecostal services, which are genuinely spontaneous and thereby seem to reflect the free movement of the Spirit.

In short, contemporary worship represents a marked deviation from traditional worship. It is a difference not only in form and method but also in content. Worship is no longer a celebration of what God has done for us in Christ but a mechanism by which the celebrants raise themselves above the clamor and dissonance of the world. Worship brings us into tune with the infinite rather than convicts us of sin and drives us to the cross of Christ in repentance. In the more avant-garde churches, worship has been reduced to entertainment, whereas in biblical perspective worship is confession, adoration and intercession.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Clement (*d.* 99AD).

(Appointed Bishop of Rome by the apostle Peter)

We shall pray without ceasing to the Creator of all things, ...
 for by your acts you made visible
 the everlasting structure of the Universe
 and set the Earth on its foundations.
 For all generations you have been faithful and just in your judgements,
 and wonderful in your power and majesty.
 Wisely you have created,
 and wisely you have kept things in being.
 All that we see shows your goodness;
 to all who trust in you,
 you are faithful, kind, and merciful.
 Forgive us our wickednesses and injustices,
 our sins and our transgressions.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:33-40

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Lord who has never failed in any of His good
promises,
Who does not leave or forsake His own,
May He turn your hearts to Him,
To walk in His Ways
And to keep His commands
that he gave our fathers in the Faith.

Scripture Reference

1 Kings 8:56–58

Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Genesis 49:1-32
- Matthew 27:27-56

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Merciful God, in your gracious presence
we confess our sin and the sin of the world.
Although Christ is among us as our peace,
we are a people divided against ourselves
as we cling to the values of a broken world.
The profit and pleasures we pursue
lay waste the land and pollute the seas.
The fears and jealousies we harbour
set neighbour against neighbour
and nation against nation.
We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
of intellect and reason,
and turn them into bonds of oppression.
Lord, have mercy upon us; heal and forgive us.
Set us free to serve you in the world
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.
Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Let those who trust the Lord be like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

May that same Lord establish you in the Gospel
 So that all peoples might believe and obey Him
 Who is the only wise God;
 the glory is to Him forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Scripture References

Psalm 125:1

Romans 16:25–27

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“Kyrie I by Fernando Ortega”](#) and consider the lyrics as you go about your day.

Kyrie, Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie, Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison

Lord, Lord have mercy
 Lord, Lord have mercy
 Lord have mercy
 Lord have mercy

Christe, Christe eleison
 Christe, Christe eleison
 Christe eleison
 Christe eleison

Christ, Christ have mercy
 Christ, Christ have mercy
 Christ have mercy
 Christ have mercy

Kyrie, Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie, Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison

Lord, Lord have mercy
 Lord, Lord have mercy
 Lord have mercy
 Lord have mercy

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Origen (185 – 254).

(Theologian in Alexandria)

Jesus, my feet are dirty.
 Come even as a slave to me,
 pour water into your bowl, come and wash my feet.
 In asking such a thing I know I am overbold,
 but I dread what was threatened when you said to me,
 "If I do not wash your feet I have no fellowship with you."
 Wash my feet then, because I long for your companionship.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 2:1-8

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Lord send you help from His sanctuary
 And grant you support from on High,
 May grace and peace be to you from the God
 Who gave himself for our sins
 to rescue us from the present evil age.

Scripture References

Psalms 20:2
Galatians 1:3

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 1:1-14, and 1:22-2:10
- Matthew 28

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for you day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of E. B. Pusey (1800 – 1882).

(Professor of Hebrew, Oxford University)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 66.

O Lord, prepare my heart, I beseech thee,
to reverence thee, to adore thee;
to hate, for love of thee, all my sins and imperfections,
shortcomings, whatever in me displeaseth thee;
and to love all which thou lovest, and whom thou lovest.
Give me, Lord, fervour of love,

shame for my unthankfulness, sorrow for my sins,
 longing for thy grace, and to be wholly united with thee.
 Let my very coldness call for the glow of thy love;
 let my emptiness and dryness, like a barren and thirsty land,
 thirst for thee, call on thee to come into my soul,
 who refreshest those who are weary.
 Let my heart ache to thee and for thee,
 who stillest the aching of the heart.
 Let my mute longings praise thee, crave for thee,
 who satisfies the empty soul that waits on thee.
 Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord establish you as a holy people to Himself,
 May He hover over you as an eagle over its young,
 Who spreads its wings and catches them
 and carries them on its pinions
 To the end that you who have put your hope in Christ
 Jesus
 would be to the praise of His glory.

Scripture References

Deuteronomy 32:11

Ephesians 1:12

DAILY ACTIVITY – Biography

BIOGRAPHY – Agape, Chionia, and Irene⁴

MARTYRS. GREECE • APRIL 3, 304

Agape, Chionia, and Irene were the daughters of pagan parents living in Thessalonica, but they came to faith in Christ and collected copies of various New Testament books until Emperor Diocletian issued a decree in A.D. 303 making it a capital offense to possess any portion of the Christian Scriptures.

Dismayed, the girls fled to the mountains and lived in a cave where they could study the Scriptures in peace. An older Christian woman visited them each week, brought whatever they needed, took their handiwork back to town to sell, and distributed any excess to the poor. One day a spy followed her to see why she made so many trips up the mountain, and he discovered the girls praying in their cave. Somehow he overcame them, bound and dragged them down the mountain, and turned them over to Governor Dulcetius.

Suspecting that the sisters were Christians, Dulcetius tried to get them to eat food offered to the Roman gods. They not only refused; they also abandoned their former timidity and boldly announced that they were Christians. The governor then questioned them about why they wouldn't comply with the emperor's edict and the laws of the land. Agape said, "I believe in the living God, and will not by an

⁴ From: Jackson, D., & Jackson, N. (2005). *The complete book of Christian heroes: over 200 stories of courageous people who suffered for Jesus* (pp. 2–3). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

evil action lose all the merit of my past life.” Her sister Chionia replied in much the same way, and Irene explained that she disobeyed the laws because she did not want to offend God.

Then the governor tried to get the sisters to reveal where they had hidden their books and papers, but they would not tell him. “Who drew you into this persuasion?” asked the governor.

“Almighty God,” answered Chionia.

“No, no. I want to know who induced you to believe this.”

“Almighty God and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“You think you can defy the just commands of our emperor, but you shall receive the punishment you deserve. I sentence Agape and Chionia to be burned alive for disobeying the emperor and professing this rash and false religion, Christianity.”

The sentence on the two older sisters was carried out on March 25. Possibly because of her youth, Irene was returned to prison.

Within a few days, the authorities found the hidden Scriptures, and the governor again examined Irene. “Your madness is plain, girl, keeping so many Scriptures of the impious Christians. If you have not taken warning from the punishment of your sisters, your punishment is unavoidable. But even now I’ll pardon you if you will worship the gods. What do you say? Will you obey the orders of the emperors? Are you ready to sacrifice to the gods and eat of the victims?”

“By no means, for those that renounce Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are threatened with eternal fire.”

Then the governor, hoping to obtain the names of other Christians, tried to get her to reveal who had influenced her and told her to hide the Scriptures or even who knew that they possessed them.

Irene replied, “Nobody but the Almighty, from Whom nothing is hid: for we concealed them even from our own domestics, lest they should accuse us.”

The angry governor then condemned her to a slower death, to be exposed naked in a soldiers’ brothel with only one small loaf of bread per day. But Irene was miraculously protected from molestation until her sentence was changed and she was condemned to death. One version says she was burned as her sisters had been. Another says that before the flames reached her, she was shot through the throat with an arrow on April 3, 304.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Augustine (354 – 430).

(Bishop of Hippo)

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
 Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
 Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
 Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
 Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:41-48

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May He who guides our feet through this vain world,
 To lead us to His heavenly seat;
 Whose mercies shall ever endure,
 When this frail world shall be no more.
 Help you to contend in the cause of the Gospel with
 your fellows whose names are written in the Book of
 Life.

Scripture Reference

Philippians 4:3

Hymn Reference

Give to God Our Immortal Praise, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
 p. 3

Week 3

Sunday February 21 – Saturday February 27

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.
Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Matthew 6:19–21

(English Standard Version)

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.** ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	Sun Feb 21, 10am and 7pm
Morning Prayer	Mon / Wed / Fri, 7-7:45am

Whom would you like to serve or spend time with? Plan and arrange the details.

Sunday

MORNING PRAYER

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is the ancient practice of opening our whole being – body, mind and spirit – to an awareness of God’s abiding presence. It is quiet but active, restful but attentive, intentional but not goal-oriented. It is making real in our experience God’s love “poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5)

It takes practice and patience and cannot be pursued as another spiritual milestone. It is a life-practice where the fruit is often experienced outside of the practice itself. Just a physical exercise may be tough in the doing, and yet we carry the benefits with us through our day, so is contemplative (or centering) prayer. Have no goal in mind. It may feel like nothing has happened. It takes a lot of practice and patience. Persevere. Simply showing up already expresses a desire for God and He will respond to your invitation.

Silence is a significant part of contemplative prayer. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). There is a hearing and seeing beyond words as we find release in opening up our unconscious mind and the depth of our souls to God.

Planning & Preparation:

- Plan initially for 15-20 minutes. (It’s a good idea to set a timer and then forget about the clock).
- Sit up straight with body relaxed, or kneel with body supported. Choose a posture that will not distract you (too uncomfortable) or make you doze off (too comfortable).
- Be in a quiet space without distractions.
- Consider having a ‘sacred’ object (cross, Bible, photo, icon, etc) in easy view. It may be helpful.

The Exercise:

1. Choose a ‘sacred’ word or phrase.
 - a. In a short time of prayer ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sacred word or phrase.
 - b. Use one that readily comes to mind (don’t search for the “perfect” one). Examples: “joy”, “good shepherd”, “grace”, “comforter”, “prince of peace”, “forgiven”, “with you always”, “Lamb of God”.
2. Softly speak your sacred word or phrase and then be still.
 - a. Dwell in God’s presence.
 - b. Fellowship is presence not talk. (Like enjoying a view with a friend.)
3. Abide. Let God’s presence touch you.
 - a. Let normal thoughts and feelings come. Don’t try to ‘empty’ your mind, but don’t let a particular thought take over.
 - b. Feel your soul letting go. (Do not go searching for thoughts or feelings.) Wait. Rest.

-
- c. Let Jesus lift any weight off your soul – fear, frustration, disappointment, desire, sadness, loneliness, anger, . . . Give it over. (Do not analyze, rationalize or sentimentalize.)
 - d. Enjoy, don't strive. Let joy and peace in. Smile at good thoughts and feelings.
 - e. Let go of tightness in your face and body. Breathe rhythmically. Release your limbs. Let God's peace spread to your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs, ...
 - f. If you doze, or your thoughts wander unhelpfully, return gently with your sacred word. (Don't use it repetitively like a mantra.)
 - g. If images crowd your mind look at your sacred object and slow your mind. Be attentive.
 - h. Experience gentleness. Receive grace. (Like enjoying a gentle breeze, or the warmth of a bath.)

4. When the timer rings, end by thoughtfully praying the Lord's Prayer.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10AM & 7PM

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of George Appleton (1902 – 1993).

(Archbishop of Perth. Archbishop of Jerusalem.)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

Lord, my heart is not large enough,
 my memory is not good enough,
 my will is not strong enough:

Take my heart and enlarge it,
Take my memory and give it quicker recall,
Take my will and make it strong
and make me conscious of thee
ever-present,
ever accompanying.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 2:9-15

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the One who sent His Son with power to save
From guilt, and darkness and the grave,
Whose ways are mercy and truth;
May He never stop doing you good;
May He inspire you to fear Him
so that you will never turn aside from Him.

Scripture Reference

Jeremiah 32:40

Hymn Reference

Give to God Our Immortal Praise, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
p. 3

Monday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 2:23 – 3:22
- John 1:1-28

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

To you, Holy God, we confess our sin
 with as much shame and sorrow as we can muster.
 We know it won't be enough
 because we are on easy terms with our sin.
 We confess to you, O God,
 that we deceive ourselves about our sin,
 and then we deceive ourselves about whether we deceive ourselves,
 slipping and sliding and sidestepping the truth.
 O God, you are holy beyond all that we can think or imagine.
 You are the source of righteousness,
 the overflowing fountain of goodness.
 You made us to be like you
 in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.
 And yet here we are, so often soiled,
 smudged, distracted from your purposes,
 and running after the gods of this world.
 Please forgive and restore us through Jesus, your son.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Now, as you depart,
 Take His Yoke upon you and learn from Him
 for He is gentle and humble of heart
 that you might find in Him, rest for your souls.
 For he has said, I give My sheep eternal life
 and they shall never perish;
 no one can snatch them out of My hand.

Scripture References

Matthew 11:28–30

John 10:28, 29

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Hauerwas, S. (2011). *Cross-Shattered Christ: Meditations on the Seven Last Words* (pp. 25–33). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

From chapter 1: The First Word

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

LUKE 23:34

Recall holding a just-born infant, or think of an occasion when you cradled a sick and soon-to-die grandparent or elderly friend. We are drawn to embrace those we love, but they can be so precious, fragile, and beautiful that we fear to take hold of them. These cross-shaped words of Jesus, words uttered in agony, put us in a similar position. We are at once drawn to these words, but we fear taking them in our hands, realizing that we cannot comprehend their power.

To comprehend these words we rightly fear would threaten all we hold dear, that is, the everyday. Everyday death always threatens the everyday, but we depend on our death-denying routines to return life to normality. But this death, and these death-determined words, are not ordinary. This is the death of the Son of God, a death that encompasses death, challenging our assumption that we have or can “come to terms with death” on our own terms. To comprehend this death, to be faced with these words, means life can never return to normal.

...

Moreover, as soon as these words from the cross are bent to serve our needs, to give us a god we believe we need, it is almost impossible to resist entertaining ourselves with speculative readings of Jesus’s words from the cross. For example we think what a wonderful savior we have in Jesus, who, even in his agony, kindly offers us forgiveness. Of course we are not all that sure what we have done that requires such forgiveness, but we are willing to try to think up something. Ironically, by trying to understand what it means for us to need forgiveness, too often our attention becomes focused on something called the “human condition” rather than the cross and the God who hangs there.

We can even begin to consider whether we need forgiveness when we did not know what we were doing. It seems Jesus does not understand that we, that is, we who assume modern accounts of responsibility, need to be forgiven only when we know what we have done. However, we give Jesus the benefit of doubt by acknowledging we often do things we should not have done and we may have

had some vague sense that we should not have done them. So we probably do need forgiving for what we have done when we may have had some sense we should not have done what we did.

Our narcissism even tempts us to try to understand Jesus's death by analogy with other deaths. Deaths imposed by unjust powers. Deaths resulting from prophetic stands. Deaths that seem meaningless at the time but are made significant by later developments. Deaths that provide some hope against the hopelessness that our own deaths seem to make unavoidable. But Jesus's death is not that of a martyr. These "last words" from the cross are not just another example of truth spoken because nothing is left to lose. By allowing himself to be handed over, Jesus in his dying is not trying to give meaning and purpose to death. As Bonhoeffer observed, Jesus's death and resurrection is not the solution to the problem of death. Rather this is the death of the Son of God.

It is also a stark reminder that these words are not first and foremost about us, about our petty sinfulness. It is the Second Person of the Trinity who asks, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The Son intimately addresses the Father. We look away, embarrassed by a love so publicly displayed. According to Herbert McCabe, these words, "Father, forgive," are nothing less than the interior life of the Triune God made visible to the eyes of faith. The Son asks the Father to forgive, a forgiveness unimaginable if this is all about us and our struggle to comprehend the meaning of our lives in the face of death. By this deed, by this word, Jesus rules out all speculative theories that seek to subject these words and this death to our understanding about what is required for the reconciliation of the world. In von Balthasar's words:

Over against such free-wheeling speculation in empty space it should not only be remembered that God is in his (ever free!) sovereignty the absolute ground and meaning of his own action, so that only foolishness can cause us to neglect his actual deeds, in favor of scouting round for other possibilities of acting. But, more than this, we must state positively that to be in solidarity with the lost is something greater than just dying for them in an externally representative manner. It is more than so announcing the Word of God that this proclamation, through the opposition it arouses among sinners, happens to lead to a violent death ... for the redeeming act consists in a wholly unique bearing of the total sin of the world by the Father's wholly unique Son, whose Godmanhood is alone capable of such an office.

Is it any wonder we find Good Friday so shattering? On this day and with these words, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing," all our presumptions about God and the salvation wrought by God are rendered presumptuous. Moreover, that is how we discover that what happens on the cross really is about us, but the "what" that is about us challenges our presumptions about what kind of salvation we need. Through the cross of Christ we are drawn into the mystery of the Trinity. This is God's work on our behalf. We are made members of a kingdom governed by a politics of forgiveness and redemption. The world is offered an alternative unimaginable by our sin-determined fantasies.

Such a politics is not constituted by vague longings for distant ideals but rather by flesh and blood. Flesh and blood as real as Christian de Cherge, the Trappist prior of the Tibhirine monastery in Algeria. Christian and his fellow monks knew their refusal to leave Algeria after the rise of Islamic radicals in 1993 might result in their deaths. Anticipating his death—he was beheaded in 1996 by Muslim radicals—Christian left a testament with his family to be opened on his death. In that testament he asks that those who love him pray that he was worthy of such a sacrifice. He expresses the fear that his death will be used to accuse in general these people, these Islamic people, whom he has come to love. He ends his testament observing:

Obviously, my death will justify the opinion of all those who dismissed me as naive or idealistic: "Let him tell us what he thinks now." But such people should know that my death will satisfy my most burning curiosity. At last, I will be able—if God pleases—to see the children of Islam

as He sees them, illuminated in the glory of Christ, sharing in the gift of God's Passion and of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to bring forth our common humanity amidst our differences.

I give thanks to God for this life, completely mine yet completely theirs, too, to God, who wanted it for joy against, and in spite of, all odds. In this Thank You—which says everything about my life—I include you, my friends past and present, and those friends who will be here at the side of my mother and father, of my sisters and brothers—thank you a thousandfold.

And to you, too, my friend of the last moment, who will not know what you are doing. Yes, for you, too I wish this thank-you, this “A-Dieu,” whose image is in you also, that we may meet in heaven, like happy thieves, if it pleases God, our common Father. Amen! Insha Allah!

Christian de Cherge is a martyr made possible by Christ's death. His life is a witness that allows us to glimpse what it means to be drawn into the life of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the life nailed to the cross. To so be made part of God's love strips us of all our presumed certainties, making possible lives like that of Christian de Cherge, that is, lives lived in the confidence that Jesus, the only Son of God, alone has the right to ask the Father to forgive people like us who would kill rather than face death. That is why we are rightly drawn to the cross, why we rightly remember Jesus's words, in the hope that we might be for the world the forgiveness made ours through the cross of Christ.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Columba (521 – 597).

(Irish Abbot. Missionary to Scotland.)

Alone with none but thee, my God,
I journey on my way.
What need I fear, when thou art near

O king of night and day?
More safe am I within thy hand
than if a host did round me stand.
Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:49-56

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the same God who delivered David from the paw of the
lion,
the paw of the bear
and the hand of the Philistine,
deliver you from our common enemy
So that you will have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of
darkness
but rather know that the Lord will reward everyone
for whatever good he or she does.

Scripture References

1 Samuel 17:37
Ephesians 5:11; 6:8

Tuesday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 4:27 – 6:1
- John 1:29-51

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Johann Arndt (1555 – 1621).

(Lutheran Pastor. Pietist)

in. Michael Counsell (ed.) *2000 Years of Prayer*, Harrisburg: PA, Morehouse Publishing, 1999. p. 260.

Gracious and gentle and condescending God,
 God of peace, Father of mercy, God of all comfort;
 see, I lament before you the evil of my heart;
 I acknowledge that I am too much disposed
 to anger, jealousy and revenge,
 to ambition and pride,

which often give rise to discord
and bitter feelings between me and others.
Too often in this way I have offended and grieved you,
my long-suffering Father,
as well as my neighbours.
Oh! forgive me this sin,
and allow me to share the blessing
which you have promised to the peacemakers,
who shall be called the children of God.
Amen

Benediction

May goodness and loving kindness follow you
all the days of your life,
May His loving-kindness and truth continually
preserve you,
So that you can say,
the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Scripture References
Psalm 23:6; 40:11; 23:1

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the World Around You

*Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil;
and whatever one has taught or the other has learned
has come from God - the Teacher of the teacher.*
- Tertullian, 2nd c.

Go for a walk today and spend time appreciating everything that you encounter. Thank God for the beauty of creation, pray for the people you see, for the neighbourhood, and for our city.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of George Appleton (1902 – 1993).

(Archbishop of Perth. Archbishop of Jerusalem.)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 61.

O Lord God, who has given me the gift of sight,
grant that I may see not only with the eyes of my head
but with the eyes of my heart also,
that I may perceive the beauty and meaning of all that I behold,
and glorify Thee, the creator of all,
who art blessed for evermore.
Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 3:1-8

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Father who bought you,
The Father who has made you and established you,
Make you complete, like-minded and comforted
By the God of love and peace.

Scripture References

*Deuteronomy 32:6. 2 Corinthians 13:11
Philippians 2:2*

Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 7:8-25
- John 2

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960)

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.

[Adapted into contemporary English]

- You who are the only origin of all that is good and fair and true,
unto you I lift up my soul.
- God, let your Spirit now enter my heart.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let not any room within me be furtively closed to keep you out.
- God, give me power to follow after that which is good.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let there be no secret purpose of evil formed in my mind,
that waits for an opportunity of fulfillment.
- God, bless all my undertakings and cause them to prosper.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not be still holding to some undertakings
on which I dare not ask your blessing.
- God, give me chastity.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not say to myself secretly, 'but not yet', or, 'but not too much'.
- God, bless every member of this household.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not still harbour in my heart
a wrongful feeling of jealousy or bitterness or anger towards any of them.

O God bless my enemies and those who have done me wrong.
 Now as I pray this prayer,
 let me not still cherish in my heart
 the resolve to requite them when occasion offers.
 O God, let your Kingdom come on earth.
 Now as I pray this prayer,
 let me not still be intending to devote my own best hours and years
 to the service of lesser ends.

O Holy Spirit of God, as I rise from these acts of devotion,
 let me not return to evil thoughts and worldly ways,
 but let that mind be in me that was also in Christ Jesus.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May your days be like a day the Lord
 inscribes on the cooking pots in the Lord's House,
 HOLINESS TO THE LORD.
 As God Himself sanctifies you completely
 so that your spirit, soul and body be preserved without
 blame
 until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture References

Zechariah 14:20, 21
1 Thessalonians 5:23

DAILY ACTIVITY

Francisco de Zurbaran, *Bound Lamb or Agnus Dei*, oil on canvas, 1635

[Overleaf]

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

This beautiful painting offers a clear reminder of what Jesus did for us. The artist paints a lamb to represent God. This lamb is tied at the feet and looks very vulnerable, with a particularly elongated and exposed neck. It is docile, accepting its position. The clean white of the wool is juxtaposed against a deep black background, showing us how different the purity of Jesus is from the sinful world.

1. What is your reaction to this painting? Do you feel sadness, anger, guilt, humility, or something else?
2. How does this painting help you understand the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made for you on the cross? Can you imagine our Lord as docile and helpless as a bound lamb?
3. When in your life have you felt called to some sort of sacrifice? How did you react?



EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

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- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Clement (d. 99AD).

(Appointed Bishop of Rome by the apostle Peter)

Come, Lord, let your face shine upon us
 so that we may peacefully enjoy all good things.
 May your powerful hand be a roof over our heads
 and may your strength preserve us from all wrongdoing.
 Free us, Lord, from those who hate us without cause.
 Give peace and harmony to us
 and to all the inhabitants of the Earth,
 as you gave them to our fathers
 who called on you with trust and faith.

You alone can give us these gifts and confer these favours on us.
 We put our trust in you through Jesus Christ, our high priest,
 the guardian of our souls.
 Through him be glory and majesty to you
 now and through all generations
 until the end of time.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:57-64

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May your prayers be counted as incense;
 The lifting up of your praise as the evening offering.
 Always giving thanks for all things
 in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the
 Father.

Scripture References

Psalm 141:2
Ephesians 5:20

Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 8:20 – 9:12
- John 3:1-21

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for you day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Johannes Kepler (1572 – 1630).

(German mathematician and astronomer)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 7.

Lord God through the light of nature
you have aroused in us a longing for the light of grace,

so that we may be raised in the light of your majesty.
 To you I give thanks, Creator and Lord,
 that you have allowed me to rejoice in your deeds.
 Praise the Lord you heavenly harmonies,
 and you who know the revealed harmonies.
 For from him, through him, and in him, all is,
 which is perceptible as well as spiritual;
 that which we know and that which we do not know,
 for there is still much to learn.
 Amen.

Benediction

And to the sheep who hear His voice
 even those the Lord calls by their name.
 Know that the Lord is God;
 It is He who made us and we are His.
 We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

Scripture References

John 10:3

Psalms 100:3

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

**Bridges, J. (1983). *The practice of godliness* (pp. 100–107). Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress.
 From Chapter 8: Thankfulness**

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
 give thanks to him and praise his name.
 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
 his faithfulness continues through all generations.*
 Psalm 100:4–5

Some virtues of Christian character, such as holiness, love, and faithfulness, are godly traits because they *reflect* the character of God. They are Godlike qualities. Other virtues are godly traits because they *acknowledge and exalt* the character of God. They are God-centered qualities that enhance our devotion to God. Such are the virtues of humility, contentment, and thankfulness. In humility we acknowledge God's majesty, in contentment His grace, and in thankfulness His goodness.

Thankfulness to God is a recognition that God in His goodness and faithfulness has provided for us and cared for us, both physically and spiritually. It is a recognition that we are totally dependent upon Him; that all that we are and have comes from God.

HONORING GOD

To fail to be thankful to God is a most grievous sin. When Paul recounts the tragic moral downfall of mankind in Romans 1, he begins with the statement, "Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." To glorify God is to acknowledge the majesty and dignity of His person. To thank God is to

acknowledge the bountifulness of His hand in providing and caring for us. And when mankind in their pride failed to give God the glory and thanks due Him, God gave them up to ever-increasing immorality and wickedness. God's judgment came because man failed to honor Him and to thank Him. If failure to give thanks is such a grievous sin, then, it behooves us to cultivate a spirit of thankfulness that permeates our entire lives.

One of the most instructive passages on the subject of thankfulness is Luke 17:11–19, the account of the healing of the ten lepers. Here were ten men in the most pitiful of all human misery. Not only were they afflicted with a terrible and loathsome disease; they were outcasts from society because of their disease. They had no one to relieve either their physical or emotional suffering. And then Jesus healed them.

As these men went to show themselves to the priest and thus be restored to their families and friends, only one of them, realizing what had happened, turned back to give thanks to Jesus. Ten men were healed, but only one gave thanks. How prone we are to be like the other nine. We are anxious to receive but too careless to give thanks. We pray for God's intervention in our lives, then congratulate ourselves rather than God for the results. When one of the American lunar missions was in serious trouble some years ago, the American people were asked to pray for the safe return of the astronauts. When they were safely back on earth, credit was given to the technological achievements and skill of the American space industry. No thanks or credit was publicly given to God. This is not unusual. It is the natural tendency of mankind.

In addition to instructing us about human nature, the account of the ten lepers also instructs us about God. Thanking Him for blessings we receive is very important to Him. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" Jesus was very much aware that only one returned to give Him thanks. And God is very much aware today when we fail to thank Him for the ordinary as well as the unusual blessings that come to us daily from His hand.

Even the angelic beings around God's throne give Him thanks. Revelation 4:9 speaks of their giving glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne and who lives forever. God has created both angels and men to glorify Him and give Him thanks. When we fail to do this we fail to fulfill one of His purposes for us.

Thanksgiving is taught in the Bible by both precept and example. In 1 Chronicles, the Levites who took part in the temple worship were to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord. The Psalms contain some thirty-five references to giving thanks to God. In eighteen instances in his letters, Paul expresses thanksgiving to God, and there are ten other instances in which he instructs us to give thanks. In all, there are approximately 140 references in the Bible to giving thanks to God. Thankfulness is no minor principle in God's sight. It is absolutely necessary to the practice of godliness.

One incident from the life of Daniel shows us the importance that this man of God put on giving thanks. We all know the story of Daniel in the lions' den, but do we remember how he got there? King Darius was persuaded by certain officials who were jealous of Daniel's position to issue a decree that for thirty days, anyone who prayed to any god or man other than King Darius would be thrown into the lions' den. When Daniel knew that the decree had been published, he went to his room and three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Now if you and I prayed at *all* under those circumstances, we'd be pleading with God for His deliverance. No doubt Daniel did pray for deliverance; but he also gave thanks. Our situation is never so desperate that it is not fitting to give thanks to God. Paul teaches us this principle in Philippians 4:6 when he says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with *thanksgiving*, present your requests to God."

When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian Christians, he was seeking to deal with an infiltration of man-made philosophy and wisdom into their church. After declaring that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, he urges the Colossians, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were

taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (2:6–7). Paul is dealing with the fundamental issues of the Christian life, and he includes the concept of thanksgiving as one of those fundamental issues. He says we are to *overflow* with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a normal result of a vital union with Christ, and a direct measure of the extent to which we are experiencing the reality of that union in our daily lives.

PURPOSES OF THANKSGIVING

The primary purpose of giving thanks to God is to acknowledge His goodness and honor Him. God says in Psalm 50:23, “He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me.” Psalm 106:1–2 says, “Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord or fully declare his praise?” When we give thanks to the Lord we proclaim His mighty acts; we acknowledge His goodness.

God is infinite in goodness to all His creatures. “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”; and “He has compassion on all he has made” (Matthew 5:45, Psalm 145:9).

He is most worthy of our praise and thanksgiving, especially if we are among His redeemed people, for He has blessed us not only in the temporal realm, but also with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:3).

Thanksgiving promotes not only the glory of God, but also humility in us. It is the tendency of the sinful human heart—even the regenerated heart—to usurp the credit that rightfully belongs only to God. On several occasions God warned the children of Israel against this tendency (see Deuteronomy 8:11–14, 8:17–18, and 9:4–7). In David’s prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts for the temple, he gratefully acknowledged that all of the abundance which the people brought came from and belonged to God. Paul constantly gave thanks to God for the spiritual progress of the churches under his care. He never took the credit for himself.

Thanksgiving also stimulates our faith. In Psalm 50:14–15, God connects thank offerings with calling upon Him in the day of trouble. Remembering God’s previous mercies encourages us to trust Him for mercies we need today. Perhaps this idea is included in Paul’s cure for anxiety in Philippians 4:6–7.

Finally, thanksgiving promotes contentment. Few things will stir up discontent within us as will our inner spiritual struggle between the sinful nature and the Holy Spirit. Its intensity caused Paul to cry out, “What a wretched man I am!” But then he finds relief and contentment in thanksgiving to God for the deliverance promised to us through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:24–25). Thanksgiving will also promote contentment about possessions, position, and providence by focusing our thoughts on the blessings God has already given, forcing us to stop spending our time yearning for things we do not have. Contentment and thanksgiving strengthen each other.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St Richard of Chichester (1197 – 1253).

(Bishop of Chichester)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 296.

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ,
 for all the benefits you have won for me.
 For all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
 O most merciful Redeemer, Friend, and Brother,
 may I know you more clearly,
 love you more dearly,
 and follow you more nearly,
 day by day.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 3:9-12

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

Grace and Peace to you who were dead in your sins
 and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,
 who God made alive in Christ and forgave all of your
 sins,
 Go rejoicing in the Lord and be glad;
 for you are the upright in heart.

Scripture References

Colossians 2:13, 14

Psalms 32:11

Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 10:1-20
- John 3:22-36

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Confession

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

God of grace,
 we confess that we have elevated
 the things of this world above you.
 We have made idols of possessions and people
 and used your name for causes
 that are not consistent with you and your purposes.
 We have permitted our schedules to come first
 and have not taken the time to worship you.
 We have not always honoured those who have guided us in life.
 We have participated in systems that take life instead of give it.
 We have been unfaithful in our covenant relationships.
 We have yearned for, and sometimes taken, that which is not ours,
 and we have misrepresented others' intentions.
 Forgive us, O God,
 for the many ways we fall short of your glory.
 Help us to learn to live together according to your ways
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Therefore, since you have received a kingdom,

which cannot be shaken
 by the Lord who said, 'My cities will again overflow with
 prosperity, the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose
 Jerusalem'.
 May the same Lord fill you with gratitude
 by which you may offer service acceptable with reverence
 and awe.

Scripture References

Hebrews 12:28

Zechariah 1:17

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“I Will Boast by Chris Tomlin”](#) and consider the lyrics as you go about your day.

I WILL BOAST

I will boast only in the cross
 Where my Savior died for me
 Nothing else, no other love,
 Goes so far and runs so deep

I will boast only in the cross
 See His head, His hands, and feet
 Scars of grace, scars that heal
 He broke the curse and set me free

Only One took the nails
 Only One tore the veil
 Only One spotless Lamb
 I will boast only in the cross

I will boast only in the cross
 The Father's love at Calvary
 My sin erased, my debt He paid
 This is my hope, the song I sing
 This is my hope, the song I sing

Only One took the nails
 Only One tore the veil
 Only One spotless Lamb
 I will boast only in the cross (2x)

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 111.

Set our hearts on fire with love for you, O Christ our God,
that in its flame we may love you with all our heart,
with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength
and our neighbours as ourselves,
so that, keeping your commandments,
we may glorify you, the giver of all good gifts.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:65-72

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the God who wipes out your transgressions, for
His sake,
And will not remember your sins,
Continually set you free from the burdens common to
men,
That you might praise His name.

And that the righteous may gather around the Lord,
Who has dealt bountifully with You.

Scripture References

Isaiah 43:25. Psalm 73:5; 142:7

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 12:1-20
- John 4:1-26

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of St Basil the Great (329 – 379).

(Bishop of Caesarea.)

Almighty Lord, God of the Powers and of all flesh,
 Who lives in the highest and cares for the humble,
 Who searches our hearts and affections, and clearly foreknows the secrets of men;
 eternal and everliving Light, in Whom is no change nor shadow of variation;
 O Immortal King, receive our prayers
 which at the present time we offer to you from unclean lips,

trusting in the multitude of your mercies.
 Forgive all sins committed by us in thought, word or deed, consciously or unconsciously,
 and cleanse us from all defilement of flesh and spirit.
 Grant us to pass the night of the whole present life
 with wakeful heart and sober thought,
 ever expecting the coming of the radiant day
 of the appearing of your only-begotten Son,
 our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
 when the Judge of all will come with glory
 to render to each according to their deeds.
 May we not be found fallen and idle, but awake and alert for action,
 ready to accompany Him into the joy and divine palace of His glory,
 where there is the ceaseless sound of those keeping festival
 and the unspeakable delight of those who behold the ineffable beauty of your Face.
 For you are the true Light that enlightens and sanctifies all,
 and all creation sings to you throughout the ages.
 Amen.

Benediction

Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him,
 Let Him shield them all day long,
 Let the one the Lord loves rest between His
 shoulders.
 That you might be steadfast, immovable and knowing
 that your toil in the Lord is not in vain.

Scripture References

Deuteronomy 33:12
1 Corinthians 15:58

DAILY ACTIVITIES – Biography

BIOGRAPHY – Dwight L. Moody⁵

(1837 – 1899). REVIVALIST WITH A COMMON TOUCH

***“If this world is going to be reached,
 I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent.”***

With his boundless physical energy, natural shrewdness, self-confidence, and eternal optimism, Dwight Lyman Moody could have become a Gilded Age industrial giant like John D. Rockefeller or Jay Gould. Instead, he became one of the great evangelists of the nineteenth century.

Pony rides to the YMCA

⁵ From: Galli, M., & Olsen, T. (2000). Introduction. In *131 Christians everyone should know* (pp. 70–72). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

He was born in Northfield, Massachusetts, to a Unitarian bricklayer's family. His father died when Moody was 4, leaving nine children for his mother, Betsey, to raise. His mother never encouraged Dwight to read the Bible, and he only acquired the equivalent of a fifth-grade education.

He struck out on his own at age 17 and sold shoes in his uncle's Boston store. He also attended YMCA and Sunday school classes, where he became a Christian at age 18. Shortly after that, he moved to Chicago, where he sold shoes and worked toward his goal of amassing a fortune of \$100,000.

It slowly dawned on Moody that, in light of his new faith, his life should not be spent on amassing wealth as much as on helping the poor. In 1858 he established a mission Sunday school at North Market Hall in a slum of Chicago. It soon blossomed into a church (from which, six years later, was formed the Illinois Street Independent Church, precursor to the now famous Moody Memorial Church). By 1861 he had left his business to concentrate on social and evangelistic work. He drew the children of the German and Scandinavian immigrant underclass to his mission with candy and pony rides, and he drew the adults through evening prayer meetings and English classes. He was convinced, "If you can really make a man believe you love him, you have won him."

There he met and later married one of the Sunday school teachers, Emma C. Revell, with whom he had three children.

As president of the Chicago YMCA for four years, he championed evangelistic causes such as distributing tracts all over the city, and he held daily noon prayer meetings. During the Civil War, he refused to fight, saying, "In this respect I am a Quaker," but he worked through the YMCA and the United States Christian Commission to evangelize the Union troops. He relentlessly sought and received financial support for all his projects from rich Christian businessmen, such as Cyrus McCormick and John Wanamaker. In all this, he tried to mix effective social work with evangelism.

The Great Chicago Fire in October 1871 destroyed Moody's mission church, his home, and the YMCA. He traveled to New York to raise funds to rebuild the church and the YMCA, but while walking down Wall Street, he felt what he described as "a presence and power" as he had never known before, so much that he cried aloud, "Hold Lord, it is enough!" He returned to Chicago with a new vision: preaching the Kingdom of God, not social work, would change the world. He now devoted his immense energies solely to the "evangelization of the world in this generation."

Innovative evangelism

Moody believed music would be a valuable tool in his evangelistic campaigns, so when, in 1870, he heard Ira Sankey sing at a YMCA convention, he convinced Sankey to give up a well-paying government career to join him on the sawdust trail.

In the summer of 1873, Moody and Sankey were invited to the British Isles by evangelical Anglicans William Pennefather and Cuthbert Bainbridge, but both sponsors died before Moody and Sankey arrived. Without official endorsement, Moody and Sankey held campaigns in York, Sunderland, and Jarrow to minimal crowds. In Newcastle, their evangelistic efforts began to reap converts, and from then on their popularity escalated. After preaching for two years in England, Scotland, and Ireland, Moody returned to America as an internationally famous revivalist. Of his fame, Moody admitted, "I know perfectly well that, wherever I go and preach, there are many better preachers ... than I am; all that I can say about it is that the Lord uses me."

Immediately, calls for crusades poured in. During these crusades, Moody pioneered many techniques of evangelism: a house-to-house canvass of residents prior to a crusade; an ecumenical approach enlisting cooperation from all local churches and evangelical lay leaders regardless of denominational affiliations; philanthropic support by the business community; the rental of a large, central building; the showcasing of a gospel soloist; and the use of an inquiry room for those wanting to repent.

Alternating between Europe and America, Moody and Sankey held numerous evangelistic campaigns before more than 100 million people. At their 1883 Cambridge, England, meetings, seven

leading university students, the famous “Cambridge Seven,” committed themselves to become missionaries in China (under Hudson Taylor).

He used every opportunity to preach. When the managers of the 1893 World’s Exhibition in Chicago decided to keep the Fair open on Sundays, many Christian leaders called for a boycott. Not Moody. He said, “Let us open so many preaching places and present the gospel so attractively that people will want to come and hear it.” On one single day, over 130,000 people attended evangelistic meetings coordinated by Moody.

Training God’s army

Through his revival work, he saw the need for an army of Bible-trained lay people to continue the work of inner-city evangelism. “If this world is going to be reached,” he said, “I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent. After all, there are comparatively few people in this world who have great talents.” In 1879 he established Northfield Seminary for girls, followed two years later by Mount Hermon School for boys.

In 1880 Moody invited adults and college-age youth to the first of many summer Bible conferences at his home in Northfield. These conferences helped nurture dispensationalism and fundamentalism, both of which were just emerging. At one conference, the Student Volunteer Movement was founded by 100 collegians who pledged to work in foreign missions after their college education.

Finally, in 1886, Moody started the Bible-Work Institute of the Chicago Evangelization Society (renamed Moody Bible Institute shortly before his death), one of the first in the Bible school movement. From this work, he launched yet another work, the Colportage Association (later Moody Press), an organization using horse-drawn “Gospel wagons” from which students sold low-cost religious books and tracts throughout the nation.

Despite a tireless schedule (he preached six sermons a day just a month before he died), he loved to spend time with his children and grandchildren at their Northfield, Massachusetts farm, where he died.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Augustine (354 – 430).

(Bishop of Hippo)

Lord Jesus, our Saviour, let us come to you.
 Our hearts are cold; Lord, warm them with your selfless love.
 Our hearts are sinful; cleanse them with your precious blood.
 Our hearts are weak; strengthen them with our joyous Spirit.
 Our hearts are empty; fill them with your divine presence.
 Lord Jesus, our hearts are yours;
 possess them always and only for yourself.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 3:13-18

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

And now forgetting what is behind,
 reach forward to that what is ahead,
 That you may exclaim with the psalmist,
 I will give thanks to Your name,
 For Your loving kindness and Your truth,
 I will give You thanks with all my heart.

Scripture References

Philippians 3:13

Psalms 138:1, 2

Week 4

Sunday February 28 – Saturday March 5

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.
Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Jeremiah 17:7–9

(New King James Version)

- ⁷ “Blessed *is* the man who trusts in the LORD,
And whose hope is the LORD.
- ⁸ **For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,
Which spreads out its roots by the river,
And will not fear when heat comes;
But its leaf will be green,
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.**
- ⁹ “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	.....	Sun Feb 28, 10am and 7pm
Morning Prayer	.....	Mon / Wed / Fri, 7-7:45am

Whom would you like to serve or spend time with? Plan and arrange the details.

Sunday

MORNING PRAYER

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is the ancient practice of opening our whole being – body, mind and spirit – to an awareness of God’s abiding presence. It is quiet but active, restful but attentive, intentional but not goal-oriented. It is making real in our experience God’s love “poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5)

It takes practice and patience and cannot be pursued as another spiritual milestone. It is a life-practice where the fruit is often experienced outside of the practice itself. Just a physical exercise may be tough in the doing, and yet we carry the benefits with us through our day, so is contemplative (or centering) prayer. Have no goal in mind. It may feel like nothing has happened. It takes a lot of practice and patience. Persevere. Simply showing up already expresses a desire for God and He will respond to your invitation.

Silence is a significant part of contemplative prayer. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). There is a hearing and seeing beyond words as we find release in opening up our unconscious mind and the depth of our souls to God.

Planning & Preparation:

- Plan initially for 15-20 minutes. (It’s a good idea to set a timer and then forget about the clock).
- Sit up straight with body relaxed, or kneel with body supported. Choose a posture that will not distract you (too uncomfortable) or make you doze off (too comfortable).
- Be in a quiet space without distractions.
- Consider having a ‘sacred’ object (cross, Bible, photo, icon, etc) in easy view. It may be helpful.

The Exercise:

1. Choose a ‘sacred’ word or phrase.
 - a. In a short time of prayer ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sacred word or phrase.
 - b. Use one that readily comes to mind (don’t search for the “perfect” one). Examples: “joy”, “good shepherd”, “grace”, “comforter”, “prince of peace”, “forgiven”, “with you always”, “Lamb of God”.
2. Softly speak your sacred word or phrase and then be still.
 - a. Dwell in God’s presence.
 - b. Fellowship is presence not talk. (Like enjoying a view with a friend.)
3. Abide. Let God’s presence touch you.
 - a. Let normal thoughts and feelings come. Don’t try to ‘empty’ your mind, but don’t let a particular thought take over.
 - b. Feel your soul letting go. (Do not go searching for thoughts or feelings.) Wait. Rest.

-
- c. Let Jesus lift any weight off your soul – fear, frustration, disappointment, desire, sadness, loneliness, anger, . . . Give it over. (Do not analyze, rationalize or sentimentalize.)
 - d. Enjoy, don't strive. Let joy and peace in. Smile at good thoughts and feelings.
 - e. Let go of tightness in your face and body. Breathe rhythmically. Release your limbs. Let God's peace spread to your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs, ...
 - f. If you doze, or your thoughts wander unhelpfully, return gently with your sacred word. (Don't use it repetitively like a mantra.)
 - g. If images crowd your mind look at your sacred object and slow your mind. Be attentive.
 - h. Experience gentleness. Receive grace. (Like enjoying a gentle breeze, or the warmth of a bath.)
4. When the timer rings, end by thoughtfully praying the Lord's Prayer.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10AM & 7PM

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546).

(Theologian and reformer)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 111.

My heavenly Father, I thank you through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son,

that you have protected me by your grace.
Forgive, I pray, all my sins and the evil I have done.
Protect me by your grace, tonight.
I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have.
Let your holy angels be with me,
so that the evil enemy may not triumph over me.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:73-80

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Lord of Hosts be with you
So that you will become greater and greater still,
Until you receive that crown of life
Which the Lord has prepared for those that love Him.

Scripture References

2 Samuel 5:10 (NASB)

James 1:12

Monday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 12:37-51
- John 4:27-54

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Word of God Incarnate,
 you came to this world to accomplish salvation.
 By your grace you call us to repent, to be crucified with you,
 that we might be raised as new creations.
 But we confess that often we do not live as renewed people.
 We confess that often we "go with the flow"
 instead of stemming sin's tide.
 Forgive us when we do not show evidence of renewal.
 Forgive us when we let the fruit of the Spirit
 be choked by the weeds of evil.
 You have made us your children, members of your kingdom.
 Help us to show evidence of that every day
 as we work to bring your justice, peace, gentleness,
 goodness, love, joy, and hope to all we meet,
 for Jesus' sake.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May our Lord who saved the great king of Judah,
 Hezekiah,

And the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the King of
 Assyria,
 and from the hand of all others,
 Enable you to say with confidence,
 The LORD is with me; He is my helper.
 I will look in triumph over my enemies.

Scripture References

2 Chronicles 32:22

Psalms 118:7

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Roxburgh, A. J., & Boren, M. S. (2009). *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*. (M. Priddy, Ed.) (pp. 116–122). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

From chapter 8: The Journey Ahead.

Don't Go without the Presence

Exodus 33 tells the story of Moses's encounter with God. He is at the beginning of the immense journey of leading God's people through the desert—a new clearing for Israel, a place they have never been before and don't recognize. Moses is fearful and needs assurance and some mechanisms for controlling and managing the challenge of leading these people. After more than four hundred years of slavery, their training as brick makers and their slave mentality will never suffice in this new space no matter how much they are dressed up in new language.

Moses is in a situation beyond his skills and abilities. Egypt had molded Israel's imagination that didn't disappear just because they crossed the Red Sea. Seeking the certainty of God's presence and wanting a way to gain control over the situation before him, Moses asks to see the face of God. But God tells him that no one can see his face and live—the certainty of God is beyond what any human being can face. Instead God covers Moses's face with his hand and then walks in front of him so that Moses is able to see his back.

Like Moses, we have also entered a *clearing* where we feel vulnerable and are searching for ways to control the unknown. We want a map or, better yet, a GPS. In this clearing we are brought face-to-face with God. In the desert clearing Moses sought to manipulate and control outcomes by trying to manage God, but he knew that he had to begin with God. At the same time, he had to learn that God would not be manipulated or managed; to be present with this God was an utterly different thing—it was to be in a place where one does not have control and can't determine the maps.

Moses's experience with God follows an encounter in which the Lord declares he will not go forward with these people. He says he will send an angel before them to drive out their enemies, but his presence will not be with them. The reason for this is what happened during Moses's earlier absence on the mountain. The newly freed slaves were terrified; they were far, far outside their safety zones and familiar boundaries that had defined the rhythms of their lives. All the familiarity of Egypt had been taken from them. They were encamped in a desert clearing, and their leader had disappeared on a mountaintop. So they did what their past experience told them should be done—they built something to represent God in some way. They created a tangible image of something familiar that would stand in their presence as protection, because they surely needed protection at that moment. In the desert clearing they defaulted to the habits and strategies of Egypt. Who would have acted differently?

When Moses finally descends from the mountain, he knows they have defaulted to their old habits; Egypt is deep in their imagination. Moses returns to the mountain to reason with God about his role with these people. He is terrified by the implications, and he says to the Lord:

You have been telling me, “Lead these people,” but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, “I know you by name and you have found favor with me.” If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.

Exodus 33:12–13

Moses is bargaining with God. He is putting it in the face of God: “Look, you are the one who called me to lead these people. They are your people not mine, so don’t beg off now in this terrible moment.” What is so amazing about the Hebrew Scriptures is that they don’t pretend or try to create some polite ideal of what is happening. Moses is terrified! He’s out of his depth and fearful of God’s response. The worst that Moses expected occurs; God has said that he will not go with them (Exod. 33:3). So Moses bargains for his own and these people’s lives. He argues with God:

If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?

Exodus 33:15–16

Moses, in desperation, risks arguing with God by saying: “Please, see what has happened! You brought these people, these slaves, out of captivity, and if you don’t go with them now, they will be destroyed and your reputation will become a laughingstock in all the earth.” The only thing that distinguishes these people and makes them unique is that out of all the people on the earth, God chose to go with them. Without God’s presence the people will be just like every other nation, so they might as well join in with another nation and live like they do. God finally relents: “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name” (Exod. 33:17). Moses understands the situation (this clearing); in this place the old tactics of Egypt won’t work. In the clearing the primary issue is that of discernment and learning all over again how to listen to God.

In our clearing we are asked to discern what God is seeking to shape even though all our instincts are to turn back to our default settings to make things work and control the outcomes. In this clearing we have to let go of our need for manageability, predictability, and control in order to listen to the God from whom new things emerge. This is how missional life develops. Our choices are between discerning God’s presence or defaulting to predetermined goals, vision statements, and strategies. We need to follow Moses’s example—he had confidence that God was present in the journey even though he had no maps of this strange territory. ...

Sailing with the Winds

We find ourselves in much the same situation as Nicodemus in his encounter with Jesus in John 3:1–8. As a Pharisee, he was a leader in the Jewish community who assumed he knew the ways of God, but he went to Jesus at night with a sense of confusion and consternation. It was clear to Nicodemus that Jesus performed the signs identified with God, but he needed to understand what was happening and where he might fit into this himself. Jesus responded by telling him he must be born again. Another way to say this is, “You need a new imagination.” Jesus was saying that the rules had to change and, therefore, Nicodemus’s understanding (imagination) was missing what God was actually up to through the presence of Jesus.

Jesus responded to Nicodemus with the words, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). The missional way is about discerning the winds of the Spirit. How do we make sense of this metaphor? In sailing, the crew focuses on how the winds are blowing and then works the sails to capture the winds. But the crew has no control over where the wind will blow. On the missional journey the challenges are the same. We can’t manage and control the Spirit, nor can we assume we know where the winds of the Spirit are blowing in this new space. We are sailing on a vast new sea where we will need to understand how the currents of mystery, memory, and mission can direct us.

The church is not driving a motorboat with control over direction and destination. The motorboat can move in a neat, straight line. A large church in Florida opted for the motorboat strategy after their strong senior leader was captured by the missional vision. They passed out books, created a new plan, and expected all programs, staff, and laypeople to align with the new missional *motor* driving the church. They then began making changes to turn what had been a successful *attractional* church onto a missional course. Within a few months, after some initial effectiveness and excitement, people felt manipulated and driven into something they did not understand. While they understood the concepts, they had not been invited into an imagination; they were simply shown a new map of where the motorboat was now heading. The experience of sailing, on the other hand, involves learning to trust the winds of the Spirit rather than a GPS system. In sailing God teaches us to attend to the ways of the Spirit.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit’s comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another’s?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer for Mission

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Almighty God, we confess how hard it is to be your people.
You have called us to be the church,

to continue the mission of Jesus to our lonely and confused world.
Yet we acknowledge we are more apathetic than active,
isolated than involved, callous than compassionate,
obstinate than obedient, legalistic than loving.
gracious Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive our sins.
Remove the obstacles preventing us
from being your representatives to a broken world.
Awaken our hearts to the promised gift of your indwelling Spirit.
This we pray in Jesus' powerful name.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 3:21-27

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the God who works wonders,
Who has made His strength known among His people,
And by His power redeemed them,
May He be your joy and delight in you always

Scripture References

Psalm 77:14, 15

Luke 1:14

Tuesday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 13:17 – 14:14
- John 5:1-23

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Philipp Melanchthon (1497 – 1560).

(Friend of Martin Luther. Lutheran Theologian)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 2-3.

We give you thanks, omnipotent, ever-living God of truth,
eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Creator of heaven and earth, of people, and of all creatures,

Sustainer of all things,
 Giver of all life, order and wisdom,
 unfailing Source of help;
 and to your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
 your Word and eternal Image:
 and to your Holy Spirit,
 with whom you endowed the apostles at Pentecost.

We give thanks to you, O God of holiness, and truth,
 wisdom and goodness, justice and mercy, purity and loving kindness,
 for with goodness and wisdom unmatched
 you revealed yourself to us,
 sending your Son into the world,
 destined to assume human nature and to become a sacrifice for us.

We give thanks to you, O God, for gathering your eternal church,
 for guarding the ministry of your word,
 for granting your Holy Spirit, and for giving everlasting life.
 We thank you, O God, because you gave us all good things,
 because you alleviated and removed the chastisement we justly deserve,
 because you bestowed on us all the blessings of souls and body.
 To you be all glory, honour, praise, and thanksgiving,
 for ever and ever.
 Amen.

Benediction

Now may He who is the mystery of godliness,
 He who appeared in a body,
 was vindicated by the Spirit,
 was seen by angels,
 was preached among the nations,
 was believed on in the world,
 and taken up in glory;
 May He humble you under His mighty hand
 that He may lift you up in due time.

Scripture References

1 Timothy 3:16

1 Peter 5:6

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the World Around You

*Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil;
 and whatever one has taught or the other has learned
 has come from God - the Teacher of the teacher.*

- Tertullian, 2nd c.

Go for a walk today and spend time appreciating everything that you encounter. Thank God for the beauty of creation, pray for the people you see, for the neighbourhood, and for our city.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Clement of Alexandria (150 – 215)

(Theologian and Teacher)

O Educator, be gracious to your children,
 O Educator, Father, Guide of Israel, Son and Father, both one, Lord.
 Give to us, who follow your command,
 to fulfill the likeness of your image,
 and to see, according to our strength,
 the God who is both a good God and a Judge who is not harsh.
 You yourself bestow all things on us who dwell in your peace,
 who have been placed in your city,
 who sail the sea of sin unruffled,
 that we may be made tranquil and supported by the Holy Spirit,
 the unutterable Wisdom, by night and day, unto the perfect day,

to sing eternal thanksgiving to the one only Father and Son, Son and Father,
Educator and Teacher with the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:81-88

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

Now to you who have died, been buried
and have been raised in Christ,
And whose life has been hidden in Christ
and who will be revealed with Him in glory;
Go, knowing that it is by your faith that you stand firm,
By His life that is at work in you.

Scripture References

Colossians 3:1–4
2 Corinthians 1:24; 4:12

Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 15:1-26
- John 5:24-47

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960).

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.

[Adapted into contemporary English]

O God my creator and redeemer,
 may I not go forth today except you accompany me with your blessing.
 Let not the vigour and freshness of the morning,
 or the glow of good health,
 or the present prosperity of my undertakings,
 deceive me into a false reliance upon my own strength.
 All these good gifts come to me from you.
 They were yours to give and they are yours also to curtail.
 They are not mine to keep; but I hold them in trust;
 and only in continued dependence upon you, the Giver,
 can they be worthily enjoyed.

Let me then put back into your hand all that you have given me,
 rededicating to your service all the powers of my mind and body,
 all my worldly goods, all my influence with other men.
 All these, O Father, are yours to use as you will.
 All these are yours, O Christ.
 All these are yours, O holy Spirit.
 Speak in my words today, think in my thoughts, and work in all my deeds.
 And seeing that it is your gracious will to make use
 even of such weak human instruments
 in the fulfillment of your mighty purpose for the world,
 let my life today be the channel

through which some little portion of your divine love and pity
may reach the lives that are nearest to my own.

In your solemn presence, O God,
I remember all my friends and neighbours,
my fellow townsfolk, and especially the poor within our gates,
beseeching you that you would give me grace,
so far as in me lies, to serve them in your name.

O blessed Jesus, who did use your own most precious life
for the redemption of your human brethren,
giving no thought to ease or pleasure or worldly enrichment,
but filling up all your hours and days with deeds of self-denying love,
give me grace today to follow the road you first have trodden;
and to your name be all the glory and the praise,
even unto the end.
Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May He Who rides a white horse,
Who is called Faithful and True.
Whose Eyes are like a blazing fire,
and upon his head are many crowns.
Who is dressed in a robe dipped in blood,
and Whose name is the Word of God.
Keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus
with the peace of God that transcends all
understanding.

Scripture References

Revelation 19:11–13

Philippians 4:7

DAILY ACTIVITY – Artwork

James Christensen, *Ten Lepers*, acrylic on canvas, 2002

[Overleaf]

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” – Luke 17:11-19



Although Christ is not depicted in this painting, he is evident in the face of the one leper. Nine of the lepers in this image are shown in a great hurry, rushing away from Jesus, their very bodies leaning away from the one who has just healed them. They are dressed in rags and have clearly been outcasts up until now. The tenth leper hesitates as he absorbs the miracle that has just happened. He is drawn apart, different from the others, and gazes back at the one who has healed him. Although this is a still image, you can just imagine him turning around and going back to Jesus while the others rush off in the opposite direction.

1. How do you think you would have reacted in this story? How have you reacted in the past to answered prayer or a surprising blessing? Do you ever feel like one of the nine lepers who didn't turn back?
2. What does this painting reveal about human nature? What does it reveal about the nature of our loving God?
3. Jesus heals all of the lepers, not differentiating between Samaritans or Galileans. How is this a comfort to you? How do you show this kind of love to others in your daily life?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.
The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Clement (*d.* 99AD).

(Appointed Bishop of Rome by the apostle Peter)

We shall pray without ceasing to the Creator of all things, ...
 for by your acts you made visible
 the everlasting structure of the Universe
 and set the Earth on its foundations.
 For all generations you have been faithful and just in your judgements,
 and wonderful in your power and majesty.
 Wisely you have created,
 and wisely you have kept things in being.
 All that we see shows your goodness;
 to all who trust in you,
 you are faithful, kind, and merciful.
 Forgive us our wickednesses and injustices,
 our sins and our transgressions.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 3:28-35

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

Now may He who has rescued us from the domain of
 darkness,
 and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
 Fill you with all knowledge
 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,
 to please Him in all respects,
 bearing fruit in every good work,
 increasing in the knowledge of God.

Scripture References
Colossians 1:13; 1:9, 10

Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

March 3

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 17
- John 6:1-21

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Soren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855).

(Danish philosopher and theologian.)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

We have our treasure in earthen vessels,
but thou, O Holy Spirit, when thou livest in a man,

thou livest in what is infinitely lower.
 Thou Spirit of Holiness,
 thou livest in the midst of impurity and corruption;
 thou Spirit of wisdom, thou livest in the midst of folly;
 thou Spirit of truth, thou livest in one who is himself deluded.
 Oh, continue to dwell there,
 thou who dost not seek a desirable dwelling place,
 for thou wouldst seek there in vain, thou Creator and Redeemer,
 to make a dwelling for thyself;
 oh, continue to dwell there,
 that one day thou mayest finally be pleased by the dwelling
 which thou didst thyself prepare in my heart,
 foolish, deceiving, and impure as it is.
 Amen

Benediction

Dear friends, be on your guard
 so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless
 men
 and fall from your secure position.
 But grow in the grace and knowledge
 of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 To him is glory both now and forever! Amen.

Scripture Reference
2 Peter 3:17, 18

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Barrier, R., & Goetz, D. L. (1998). *Listening to the voice of God* (pp. 66–75). Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

From chapter 4: Watering the Garden.

It is easier to be smart and well-refined than it is to be spiritual. I know that spiritual maturity does not occur automatically. A well-functioning inner spirit must be cultivated. Paul prayed often for the inner spiritual development of his charges. For example, he told the Ephesians: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that ... you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (3:16–19).

During this time, I developed a model for cultivating my inner spirit. It’s all too easy for pastors, as well as laypeople, to stay immature spiritually. Here is my model for being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God:

1. Practice the disciplines. I never knew spiritual disciplines formally existed until I read Richard Foster’s book *The Celebration of Discipline*. He details the activities that have brought spiritual growth and cultivation of the inner spirit to the faithful for two thousand years. I discovered I already practiced several disciplines, such as prayer, service, worship, submission, confession, study, and

celebration. Several others, however, were not part of my everyday Christian experience: meditation, fasting, simplicity, solitude, and guidance. I vowed to implement these into my life.

For example, I decided to practice fasting. I learned that fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. A normal fast involves abstaining from all foods, but not from water (liquids). An absolute fast, no food or water, is reserved for extreme circumstances and never lasts more than three days except by supernatural empowerment. Of course, people with medical problems need to check with their doctors before beginning to fast.

I discovered the Bible reveals various reasons for fasting: I fast when I want to know God's will—such as whether to hire a new staff member or to relocate the church (Acts 13:2). I fast before long, dangerous journeys—mission trips to the Ukraine or Turkey (Ezra 8:21–23). I fast to humble myself before God—when I am overcome with pride, selfish ambition, or a spirit of competition (Deuteronomy 8:2–14). I fast when I want to get God's attention—such as when my daughter was dying (Joel 2:12; 1 Kings 21:20–29; and 2 Samuel 12:22–23). I fast when I need to overcome a stronghold in my life—such as overeating (Isaiah 58:6). I fast for protection and physical safety—such as before I had my colon removed (Esther 4:15–16). I fast to enhance my worship of God—on Saturdays before Sunday services (Luke 2:37).

I began with a one-meal fast and gradually increased to fasts of three days or longer. Normally I fast for either twenty-four hours or for three days, depending on what I sense to be the prompting of the Holy Spirit. I learned not to begin with a long fast. The body grows accustomed to fasting by degrees. Arthur Wallis's book *God's Chosen Fast* was a helpful resource in learning about this spiritual discipline.

2. Listen deep in the inner spirit. Julie and I used to select a spiritual subject or biblical topic to study while on vacation. (Unfortunately, the practice died out when our children arrived.) We were inching along in a rental car through a construction zone outside of Pittsburgh, when Julie looked at me and said, “We haven't picked a subject for this vacation. What do you want to study?”

I had nothing in mind, so I was pleased when she continued.

“Have you ever heard a sermon on the human spirit?” she asked. “The Bible has a lot to say about body, soul, and spirit. Do you know the difference between a soul and a spirit?”

“No, I have never heard a sermon on that, and no, I don't know the difference between a soul and a spirit.”

We had our vacation study subject. We were intrigued by Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:15, “I will pray with my spirit ... [and] with my mind; I will sing with my spirit ... [and] with my mind.” And in 1 Corinthians 2:10–13, Paul describes how the Holy Spirit expresses spiritual words to our inner, human spirit. Our summer study led toward a deeper intimacy with God as we began to cultivate the art of listening for God to communicate with us—Holy Spirit to human spirit. We discovered the human spirit is our organ for God-consciousness and the seat of our communion with God, where he longs to minister to and fellowship with us.

Listening for the voice of God in my inner spirit was not easy at first. I had to learn to quiet my mind if I were to hear the “still, small voice.” My mind was active and undisciplined. There were too many things I wanted to think about.

The human brain operates at different speeds. In deep sleep, the brain slows to zero to three cycles per second (the delta wave). The brain moves toward increasing levels of wakefulness at four to seven cycles per second (the theta wave). The alpha wave, eight to thirteen cycles per second, is best for creativity and contemplation—such as for communing with God and hearing God speak. Most Americans, however, spend the bulk of their waking hours in the more rapid beta-wave level of brain activity. This speed, fourteen to twenty-five cycles per second, is perfectly suited for baking casseroles, going to meetings, and solving problems. Unfortunately, it is possible to live at even faster levels of brain intensity. As the cycles increase, we find ourselves in hassled, hurried, frenzied states of mind. I

am convinced much of my struggle in learning to hear God speak resulted from a fast-paced life in a rapid-fire, imagery-oriented society, which tended to overload my mental circuits and distract me from hearing the voice of God, just as surely as massive radio jamming kept the Gospel out of many Communist countries during the cold war.

The first time I tried to slow down my mind and sit quietly before God, I found my thoughts wandered everywhere. Hearing God's still, small voice was well nigh impossible when thinking about tomorrow's lunch appointment, or next Sunday's sermon, or the balance in my checkbook, or Deacon Smith's surgery that I forgot. I could travel from my driveway to the rings of Saturn in seconds. I had to acquire new skills to focus my listening habits. So I practiced taking my runaway thoughts "captive" as Paul encourages in 2 Corinthians 10:5. Two things helped as I learned to meditate.

First, I set aside time to quiet down and make a conscious choice to calm my soul. When I was in college, Julie challenged me to memorize Psalm 131 in the *Revised Standard Version*. It is one of the Songs of Ascents that lead to the worship of God. David wrote:

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,
 my eyes are not raised too high;
 I do not occupy myself with things
 too great and too marvelous for me.
 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
 like a child quieted at its mother's breast;
 like a child that is quieted is my soul.

I noted that David had a choice. And so did I. He could let his mind run away if he wanted to, or he could quiet his mind and not worry about all the big issues that bombarded his life. So could I.

Second, I utilized Madame Guyon's guidelines for quieting the mind in *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*. She recommended focusing on a Bible passage (such as Psalm 23) or meditating on a comforting image of Christ (such as the Lord ministering to the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8). At first I was able to sit quietly only for minutes at a time. Soon minutes turned into quarter-hours, then half-hours, and occasionally hours. I learned to concentrate and pray slowly through the Scriptures or meditate on Christ until my mind was sufficiently settled. Then I listened for God's Spirit to speak deep within.

I believe this is a small part of what Paul meant when he discussed "praying in his spirit." I pray with my mind by working through a prayer list and by consciously praying for the things I know need prayer. Then, when the list is complete, I quiet my mind and seek to commune with God in my spirit. I listen for God's voice and sense his promptings to pray for people and for situations that would normally never come to my mind. My most precious experiences occur when God speaks by his Holy Spirit to my human spirit.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?

-
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
 - What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (AD 339-397)

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all,
 take away from me my sins,
 and mercifully kindle in me
 the fire of your Holy Spirit.
 Take away from me the heart of stone,
 and give me a heart of flesh,
 a heart to love and adore you,
 a heart to delight in you,
 to follow and enjoy you,
 for Christ's sake,
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:89-96

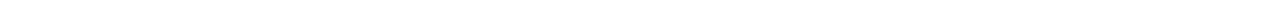
- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the Lord,
 Who longs to be gracious to you,
 Who waits on high to have compassion on you,
 Plant you firmly in the faith,
 established, steadfast and unmovable
 Through the hope of the Gospel,
 proclaimed to all the creation under heaven.

Scripture References

Isaiah 30:18
Colossians 1:23



Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 19
- John 6:27-40

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Latin Prayer, 10th Century

in. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 107.

Lord God, omnipotent Father, creator of all things,
 you gave me a body and a soul,
 and created me in your image before time was.
 O Lord, my God, I confess my offences to you;
 I have sinned before you and before your angels,
 and my sins are as numerous as the sands of the seashore.
 Yet for your love have mercy on me,
 God, let me not perish.
 Do not turn your face from me
 since I do not seek your forgiveness because I think I deserve it,
 but because of your mercy.
 Look down on me, Lord, from the holy seat of your majesty,
 and illumine the shadows of my heart with the radiance of your splendour.
 Protect me Lord, with the shield of your truth and faith,
 so that the glowing darts of the devil may not pierce me.
 Have mercy, Saviour of the world,
 who lives and reigns forever.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Now to you who were formerly alienated
and hostile in your mind,
who have now been reconciled through His death
in order to present you holy and blameless and beyond
reproach,
Go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
until, as it were, the mountains burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field clap their hands.

Scripture References

Colossians 1:21, 22

Isaiah 55:12

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“The Old Rugged Cross by Paul Brandt”](#) and consider the lyrics as you go about your day.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross
The emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
'Til my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown

To that old rugged cross I will ever be true
Its shame and reproach gladly bear
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away
Where His glory forever I'll share

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
'Til my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown

Oh, I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Augustine (354 - 430)

(Bishop of Hippo)

Look upon us, O Lord,
and let all the darkness of our souls
vanish before the beams of thy brightness.
Fill us with holy love,
and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom.
All our desire is known unto thee,
therefore perfect what thou hast begun,
and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.
We seek thy face,
turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory.
Then shall our longing be satisfied,
and our peace shall be perfect.
Amen

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 4:1-9

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

And now hear from the God Who dwells in the
heavenly Zion:
Blessed is the one Who He chooses to dwell in His
courts,
for He will satisfy your house with goodness

and by awesome deeds,
answer all who trust in Him.

Scripture Reference
Psalms 65:4

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 22:20 – 23:17
- John 6:41-71

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of E. B. Pusey (1800 – 1882).

(Professor of Hebrew, Oxford University)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 66.

O Lord, prepare my heart, I beseech thee,
to reverence thee, to adore thee;
to hate, for love of thee, all my sins and imperfections,
shortcomings, whatever in me displeaseth thee;
and to love all which thou lovest, and whom thou lovest.

Give me, Lord, fervour of love,
 shame for my unthankfulness, sorrow for my sins,
 longing for thy grace, and to be wholly united with thee.
 Let my very coldness call for the glow of thy love;
 let my emptiness and dryness, like a barren and thirsty land,
 thirst for thee, call on thee to come into my soul,
 who refreshes those who are weary.
 Let my heart ache to thee and for thee,
 who stillest the aching of the heart.
 Let my mute longings praise thee, crave for thee,
 who satisfies the empty soul that waits on thee.
 Amen.

Benediction

Now in the name of the One who has made us debt
 free,
 And removed that hostility between God and His
 people,
 Having removed all of our transgressions.
 May He be your confidence
 and deliver your foot from every snare.

Scripture References

Colossians 2:14, 15

Proverbs 3:26

DAILY ACTIVITY – Biography

BIOGRAPHY – Dietrich Bonhoeffer⁶

(1906 – 1945)

GERMAN THEOLOGIAN, RESISTER, MARTYR.

“Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

“The time is fulfilled for the German people of Hitler. It is because of Hitler that Christ, God the helper and redeemer, has become effective among us.... Hitler is the way of the Spirit and the will of God for the German people to enter the Church of Christ.” So spoke German pastor Hermann Gruner. Another pastor put it more succinctly: “Christ has come to us through Adolph Hitler.”

So despondent had been the German people after the defeat of World War I and the subsequent economic depression that the charismatic Hitler appeared to be the nation’s answer to prayer—at least to most Germans. One exception was theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was determined not only to refute this idea but also to topple Hitler, even if it meant killing him.

⁶ From: Galli, M., & Olsen, T. (2000). *131 Christians everyone should know* (pp. 378–380). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

From pacifist to co-conspirator

Bonhoeffer was not raised in a particularly radical environment. He was born into an aristocratic family. His mother was daughter of the preacher at the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and his father was a prominent neurologist and professor of psychiatry at the University of Berlin.

All eight children were raised in a liberal, nominally religious environment and were encouraged to dabble in great literature and the fine arts. Bonhoeffer's skill at the piano, in fact, led some in his family to believe he was headed for a career in music. When at age 14, Dietrich announced he intended to become a minister and theologian, the family was not pleased.

Bonhoeffer graduated from the University of Berlin in 1927, at age 21, and then spent some months in Spain as an assistant pastor to a German congregation. Then it was back to Germany to write a dissertation, which would grant him the right to a university appointment. He then spent a year in America, at New York's Union Theological Seminary, before returning to the post of lecturer at the University of Berlin.

During these years, Hitler rose in power, becoming chancellor of Germany in January 1933, and president a year and a half later. Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric and actions intensified—as did his opposition, which included the likes of theologian Karl Barth, pastor Martin Niemöller, and the young Bonhoeffer. Together with other pastors and theologians, they organized the Confessing Church, which announced publicly in its Barmen Declaration (1934) its allegiance first to Jesus Christ: “We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and must recognize yet other happenings and powers, personalities and truths as divine revelation alongside this one Word of God....”

In the meantime, Bonhoeffer had written *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937), a call to more faithful and radical obedience to Christ and a severe rebuke of comfortable Christianity: “Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

During this time, Bonhoeffer was teaching pastors in an underground seminary, Finkenwalde (the government had banned him from teaching openly). But after the seminary was discovered and closed, the Confessing Church became increasingly reluctant to speak out against Hitler, and moral opposition proved increasingly ineffective, so Bonhoeffer began to change his strategy. To this point he had been a pacifist, and he had tried to oppose the Nazis through religious action and moral persuasion.

Now he signed up with the German secret service (to serve as a double agent—while traveling to church conferences over Europe, he was supposed to be collecting information about the places he visited, but he was, instead, trying to help Jews escape Nazi oppression). Bonhoeffer also became a part of a plot to overthrow, and later to assassinate, Hitler.

As his tactics were changing, he had gone to America to become a guest lecturer. But he couldn't shake a feeling of responsibility for his country. Within months of his arrival, he wrote theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, “I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period in our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people.”

Bonhoeffer, though privy to various plots on Hitler's life, was never at the center of the plans. Eventually his resistance efforts (mainly his role in rescuing Jews) was discovered. On an April afternoon in 1943, two men arrived in a black Mercedes, put Bonhoeffer in the car, and drove him to Tegel prison.

Radical reflections

Bonhoeffer spent two years in prison, corresponding with family and friends, pastoring fellow prisoners, and reflecting on the meaning of “Jesus Christ for today.” As the months progressed, he

began outlining a new theology, penning enigmatic lines that had been inspired by his reflections on the nature of Christian action in history.

“God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross,” he wrote. “He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. [The Bible] ... makes quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.... The Bible directs man to God’s powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.”

In another passage, he said, “To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to be a man—not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life.”

Eventually, Bonhoeffer was transferred from Tegel to Buchenwald and then to the extermination camp at Flossenbürg. On April 9, 1945, one month before Germany surrendered, he was hanged with six other resisters.

A decade later, a camp doctor who witnessed Bonhoeffer’s hanging described the scene: “The prisoners ... were taken from their cells, and the verdicts of court martial read out to them. Through the half-open door in one room of the huts, I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a prayer and then climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued in a few seconds. In the almost 50 years that I have worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.”

Bonhoeffer’s prison correspondence was eventually edited and published as *Letters and Papers from Prison*, which inspired much controversy and the “death of God” movement of the 1960s (though Bonhoeffer’s close friend and chief biographer, Eberhard Bethge, said Bonhoeffer implied no such thing). His *Cost of Discipleship*, as well as *Life Together* (about Christian community, based on his teaching at the underground seminary), have remained devotional classics.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Clement (*d.* 99AD).

(Appointed Bishop of Rome by the apostle Peter)

Come, Lord, let your face shine upon us
so that we may peacefully enjoy all good things.
May your powerful hand be a roof over our heads
and may your strength preserve us from all wrongdoing.
Free us, Lord, from those who hate us without cause.
Give peace and harmony to us
and to all the inhabitants of the Earth,
as you gave them to our fathers
who called on you with trust and faith.

You alone can give us these gifts and confer these favours on us.
We put our trust in you through Jesus Christ, our high priest,
the guardian of our souls.
Through him be glory and majesty to you
now and through all generations
until the end of time.
Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:97-104

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May that One, in whom we have redemption through His
blood,
The forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of His
grace,
Lavish on you all wisdom and understanding.
So that you might keep your heart on the right path.

Scripture References

Ephesians 1:7–8
Proverbs 23:19

Week 5

Sunday March 6 – Saturday March 12

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.
Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Luke 11:9–13

(English Standard Version)

⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ **If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”**

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	.....	Sun Mar 6, 10am and 7pm
Morning Prayer	.....	Mon / Wed / Fri, 7-7:45am

Whom would you like to serve or spend time with? Plan and arrange the details.

Sunday

MORNING PRAYER

March 6

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is the ancient practice of opening our whole being – body, mind and spirit – to an awareness of God’s abiding presence. It is quiet but active, restful but attentive, intentional but not goal-oriented. It is making real in our experience God’s love “poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5)

It takes practice and patience and cannot be pursued as another spiritual milestone. It is a life-practice where the fruit is often experienced outside of the practice itself. Just a physical exercise may be tough in the doing, and yet we carry the benefits with us through our day, so is contemplative (or centering) prayer. Have no goal in mind. It may feel like nothing has happened. It takes a lot of practice and patience. Persevere. Simply showing up already expresses a desire for God and He will respond to your invitation.

Silence is a significant part of contemplative prayer. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). There is a hearing and seeing beyond words as we find release in opening up our unconscious mind and the depth of our souls to God.

Planning & Preparation:

- Plan initially for 15-20 minutes. (It’s a good idea to set a timer and then forget about the clock).
- Sit up straight with body relaxed, or kneel with body supported. Choose a posture that will not distract you (too uncomfortable) or make you doze off (too comfortable).
- Be in a quiet space without distractions.
- Consider having a ‘sacred’ object (cross, Bible, photo, icon, etc) in easy view. It may be helpful.

The Exercise:

1. Choose a ‘sacred’ word or phrase.
 - a. In a short time of prayer ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sacred word or phrase.
 - b. Use one that readily comes to mind (don’t search for the “perfect” one). Examples: “joy”, “good shepherd”, “grace”, “comforter”, “prince of peace”, “forgiven”, “with you always”, “Lamb of God”.
2. Softly speak your sacred word or phrase and then be still.
 - a. Dwell in God’s presence.
 - b. Fellowship in presence not talk. (Like enjoying a view with a friend.)
3. Abide. Let God’s presence touch you.
 - a. Let normal thoughts and feelings come. Don’t try to ‘empty’ your mind, but don’t let a particular thought take over.
 - b. Feel your soul letting go. (Do not go searching for thoughts or feelings.) Wait. Rest.
 - c. Let Jesus lift any weight off your soul – fear, frustration, disappointment, desire, sadness, loneliness, anger, . . . Give it over. (Do not analyze, rationalize or sentimentalize.)

-
- d. Enjoy, don't strive. Let joy and peace in. Smile at good thoughts and feelings.
 - e. Let go of tightness in your face and body. Breathe rhythmically. Release your limbs. Let God's peace spread to your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs, ...
 - f. If you doze, or your thoughts wander unhelpfully, return gently with your sacred word. (Don't use it repetitively like a mantra.)
 - g. If images crowd your mind look at your sacred object and slow your mind. Be attentive.
 - h. Experience gentleness. Receive grace. (Like enjoying a gentle breeze, or the warmth of a bath.)

4. When the timer rings, end by thoughtfully praying the Lord's Prayer.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10AM & 7PM

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Johannes Kepler (1572 – 1630).

(German mathematician and astronomer)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 7.

Lord God though the light of nature
you have aroused in us a longing for the light of grace,
so that we may be raised in the light of your majesty.

To you I give thanks, Creator and Lord,
that you have allowed me to rejoice in your deeds.
Praise the Lord you heavenly harmonies,
and you who know the revealed harmonies.
For from him, through him, and in him, all is,
which is perceptible as well as spiritual;
that which we know and that which we do not know,
for there is still much to learn.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 4:20-27

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

And now O Lord, rain down righteousness;
let the clouds shower it down.
Let the earth open wide,
let salvation spring up,
let righteousness grow with it;
So that your people may be mature and complete,
never lacking anything.

Scripture References

Isaiah 45:8

James 1:4

Monday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 24
- John 7:1-24

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you love us,
but we have not loved you.
You have opened your heart to us,
and in our pride we have spurned your care.
You have given us all things, and we have squandered your gifts.
We have grieved you and caused hurt to others,
and we are not worthy to be called your children.
Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we are ashamed
and sorry for all we have done to displease you.
Cleanse us from our sin and receive us again into your household,
That we might nevermore stray from your love
but always remain within the sound of your voice.
Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May our Lord who has laid up for you a hope in heaven
where moth and rust cannot destroy,
Keep you strong to the end,
so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Scripture References
Colossians 1:5. Matthew 6:19, 20. 1 Corinthians 1:8
DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Jones, J. (2003). *Jesus and the Earth* James Jones (pp. 16–20). London: SPCK.

From chapter 1: The Son of Man has Authority on Earth.

Turning to the Gospel of John we are arrested by the declaration: ‘All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.’ This is a confessional statement about the Word who is Jesus. This is echoed through the primary chapters of Colossians, Ephesians and Hebrews. Colossians 1:16. ‘For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible ... all things have been created through him and for him.’ Never has so much theology hung on two such small prepositions, ‘through’ and ‘for’!

It is these credal statements that lead to a high view of creation. It is the gift of Christ. Respect for and reverence of the earth follows as it does for the whole of the created order contained in that small ‘all’. This distinctively Christian insight ought to shape and form a Christian’s attitude to the environment. Creation does not exist for the human family but for Christ. The earth is here for us to delight in, to manage, to serve, but its centre is inhabited by Christ alone and not us. It is a blasphemy to usurp Christ’s place. When critics of Christian attitudes to the environment such as the ecologist Lyn White have lambasted us for elevating ourselves over the rest of creation and exploiting it by our own devices and for our own desires they have been right to challenge such anthropocentrism. The Bible dethrones such ambitions and affirms the centrality of Christ not just to salvation but also to creation.

In John 12 we find a third Son of Man/earth saying: ‘ “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people [all things] to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered ... “How can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up?” ’ Here again the Son of Man is found in the same context as the earth and is cast in the role of the one who will draw all to himself. Echoes again of Colossians: ‘And through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven by making peace through the blood of his cross.’ The Son of Man’s ministry is one of connectedness with the earth. Jesus self-consciously sees himself on a mission through which he should lose nothing of what has been given to him. ‘I have come down from heaven [to earth] not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me’ (John 6:39). Jesus has the whole cosmos in his sights, not just individual souls who want to escape earth and bag a place elsewhere. The earth is within God’s cosmic purposes.

The earth as God’s footstool

Jesus had a high view of the earth even though he fully recognized that it was blighted by the curse of human sinfulness. In Matthew 5 he tells his followers, ‘But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool.’ The latter image might suggest something demeaning, a picture of God Atlas-like with fist on forehead, knee bent and trampling earth beneath his foot. Nothing could be further from the truth. ‘Footstool’ was far from a demeaning image; it was the word used to describe the Ark of the Covenant. ‘I had planned to build a house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God’ (1 Chronicles 28:2). The footstool is God’s touching place, where his presence is found. Isaiah says:

Heaven is my throne
and the earth is my footstool ...
... all these things my hand has made
And so all these things are mine. (Isaiah 66:1, 2)

Herein lies the sacredness of the earth and the theological truth upon which Christians form an ethic about the earth. The reason we respect and cherish the earth is precisely because it is God's footstool, his resting place. This comes through again in Jesus' understanding in Matthew 10:29. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the earth apart from your Father.' This verse shows the universal care of God. In many translations 'knowledge', 'knowing' or 'will' are added to 'Father'. But in the original it is simply 'without your Father'. Jesus shows God connected with the earth, Emmanuel, God with us.

Even though the earth is cursed by human sinfulness and bears all the wounds of exploitation and abuse it is nevertheless originally good and graced by the presence of God. So what is the future of the earth? The New Testament uses ambiguous language when painting pictures of the earth's future, language of continuity and discontinuity as we shall see in Chapter 3. I side with those who believe that there will be a continuity between the earth as we now know it 'and the new heaven and the new earth' featured in Isaiah 65 and Revelation. The vivid language used to describe the future and in particular the return of Christ suggests for the future a time of crisis as the earth gives birth to a new and transformed earth.

The mission of the Son of Man is the renewing of all things. Jesus comes to the earth as the Son of Man urging us to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom which is the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. As we shall see later in this book, the implications of the prayer are personal, parochial and political. Whatever the relationship is between the Son of Man and the earth the clear message of the Gospels is that the earth is the arena of the mission of Jesus. Some may think that I have made too much of the passages where Jesus speaks of himself of the Son of Man and in the same breath talks of the earth.

Meanwhile I conclude this first chapter reflecting on how we actually pray the Lord's Prayer liturgically. It expresses and reinforces the Church's disconnectedness from the earth.

Our Father (Pause)
 who art in heaven (Pause)
 hallowed be thy name (Pause)
 thy Kingdom come (Pause)
 thy will be done (Pause)
 on earth as it is in heaven (Pause ...)

We abstract and dislocate the doing of God's will from the sphere of the incarnation! Admittedly, there is a comma in the Greek text yet the petition that parallels the yearning for the coming Kingdom is 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven'. Admittedly too we need to take a breath, but we would do better to breathe after the earth than before it!

The consummation of the coming Kingdom is the earthing of heaven. World mission is the earthing of heaven globally. Local mission is the earthing of heaven locally. The sooner we leave out the pause between 'thy will be done' and 'on earth as it is in heaven' the greater will be our own connection with the earth and the deeper will be our obedience to the commitment of Jesus to the earth, present and future.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

-
- What was life-giving today?
 - When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
 - What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
 - What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Johann Arndt (1555 – 1621).

(Lutheran Pastor. Pietist)

in. Michael Counsell (ed.) 2000 Years of Prayer, Harrisburg: PA, Morehouse Publishing, 1999. p. 260.

Gracious and gentle and condescending God,
 God of peace, Father of mercy, God of all comfort;
 see, I lament before you the evil of my heart;
 I acknowledge that I am too much disposed
 to anger, jealousy and revenge,
 to ambition and pride,
 which often give rise to discord
 and bitter feelings between me and others.
 Too often in this way I have offended and grieved you,
 my long-suffering Father,
 as well as my neighbours.
 Oh! forgive me this sin,
 and allow me to share the blessing
 which you have promised to the peacemakers,
 who shall be called the children of God.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:105-112

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the God of hope
 fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
 so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
 you may abound in hope.

Scripture Reference
Romans 15:13

Tuesday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 28:1-4, 29-41
- John 7:25-52

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536)

(Dutch Theologian)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 52.

[Adapted into modern English]

O Lord Jesus Christ,
the maker and redeemer of mankind
who said you are the way, the truth and the life:
the way by doctrine, precepts and examples;

the truth, in promises;
 and the life, in reward;
 I beseech you for your unspeakable love's sake,
 through which you have granted to employ yourself wholly for our salvation,
 allow me not at any time to stray from you, who are the way;
 nor to distrust your promises, which are the truth,
 for you fulfill whatever you promise;
 nor to rest in anything other than you, who are the life,
 beyond whom there is nothing to be desired,
 neither in heaven or earth.
 From you we have learned the sure and ready way to true salvation,
 with the intent that we should not wander any longer
 up and down in the mazes of the world.
 You have taught us thoroughly
 what to believe,
 what to do,
 what to hope,
 and where to find rest.
 Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble!
 May the name of the God of Jacob protect you.
 May you shout for joy over your salvation
 and may you in the name of our God establish our
 banners.

Scripture Reference
Psalm 20:1, 5

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the World Around You

*Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil;
 and whatever one has taught or the other has learned
 has come from God - the Teacher of the teacher.*
 - Tertullian, 2nd c.

Go for a walk today and spend time appreciating everything that you encounter. Thank God for the beauty of creation, pray for the people you see, for the neighbourhood, and for our city.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. John Chrysostom (349-407)

(Archbishop of Constantinople)

O Lord, accept me in penitence.
 O Lord, leave me not.
 O Lord, lead me not into temptation.
 O Lord, grant me good thoughts.
 O Lord, grant me tears and remembrance of mortality and contrition.
 O Lord, grant me the thought of confessing my sins.
 O Lord, grant me humility, chastity and obedience.
 O Lord, grant me patience, courage and meekness.
 O Lord, plant in me the root of all blessings,
 the fear of you in my heart.
 O Lord, grant me to love you with all my mind and soul,
 and always to do your will.
 O Lord, protect me from certain people, and demons, and passions,
 and from every other harmful thing.
 O Lord, you know that you act as you will;
 may your will be also in me, a sinner.
 Blessed are you forever.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 6:20-29

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.

-
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
 - Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

Now may He who raises the poor from the dust,
The needy from the ash heap;
And makes them sit with nobles
And inherit a seat of honor.
Bear you through troubled days,
To you who trust in God's unchanging love.

Scripture Reference

1 Samuel 2:8

Hymn Reference

If Thou but Suffer God Guide Thee, Georg Neumark (1621–
1681); TH p. 670

Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 32
- John 8:1-30

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960).

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.

[Adapted into contemporary English]

Almighty and eternal God, you are hidden from my sight:
You are beyond the understanding of my mind:
Your thoughts are not as my thoughts:
Your ways are past finding out.

Yet have you have breathed your Spirit into my spirit:
Yet have you have formed my mind to seek you:
Yet have you have inclined my heart to love you:
Yet have you have made me restless for the rest that is in you:
Yet have you planted within me a hunger and thirst
that make me dissatisfied with all the joys of earth.

O Lord God, I praise and magnify your name
that thus you have set your seal upon my inmost being,
not leaving me to my own poor and petty selfhood
or to the sole empire of animal passion and desire,
but calling me to be an heir of your eternal Kingdom.
I bless you for that knocking at my heart's door
that warns me of your waiting presence.
I bless you for your hand upon my life,
and for the sure knowledge that, however I may falter and fail,
yet underneath are your everlasting arms.

O you who alone knows what lies before me this day,
 grant that in every hour of it I may stay close to you.
 Let me be in the world but not of it.
 Let me use the world without abusing it.
 If I buy let me be as though I do not possess.
 If I have nothing, let me be as though possessing all things.
 Let me today embark on no undertaking that is not in line with your will for my life,
 nor shrink from any sacrifice which your will may demand.
 Suggest, direct, control every movement of my mind;
 for my Lord Jesus Christ's sake.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

To you who are debtors to mercy alone
 And free from the terrors of the law.
 Walk in the light, as he is in the light,
 so that the blood of Jesus, God's Son,
 purifies you from all sin.

Scripture Reference

1 John 1:7

Hymn Reference

A Debtor of Mercy Alone, Augustus Toplady (1740–1778); TH
 p. 463

DAILY ACTIVITY

John Tatschl, *Peter's Denial*, woodcut, 1955

[Overleaf]

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

– Matthew 26:74b-75

In this simple woodcut, Peter is portrayed as trapped and isolated in a bubble of guilt and grief. All else is black, unimportant in this moment, as Peter grapples with his denial of the one he loves, Jesus Christ. The rooster is stretched out and towers over Peter, who shrinks in fear of the truth it brings with its call. Peter's hands are splayed and his head is thrown back, showing his surprise at the denial he swore would not happen.

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you, like Peter, had to stand up for what you believe in? How did you react? Can you relate to Peter's denial?
2. How do you relate to this image of isolation in a moment of painful truth? When in your life have you had to come to terms with a wrong decision you made?
3. How have you repented at such times? Where was God?



EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?

-
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
 - What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
 - Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

A Prayer of St Apollonius (d. 185)

(Roman nobleman. Martyred. Proclaimed his faith before an antagonistic Roman Senate when denounced.)

O Lord Jesus Christ,
 give us a measure of your Spirit
 that we may be enabled
 to obey your teaching:
 to pacify anger,
 to take part in pity,
 to moderate desire,
 to increase love,
 to put away sorrow,
 to cast away vanity,
 not to be vindictive,
 not to fear death;
 ever entrusting our spirit to the immortal God
 who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns
 world without end.
 Amen

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:113-120

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the bliss of this glorious thought—
 my sin, not in part but the whole
 is nailed to the Cross and you bear it no more,
 Comfort you in all your troubles
 so that you may comfort those in trouble
 with that comfort you have received from God!

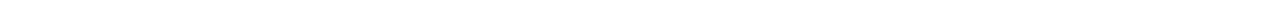
Scripture Reference

2 Corinthians 1:4

Hymn Reference

It is Well with My Soul, Horatio G. Spafford (1828–1888); TH p.

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Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Exodus 34
- John 8:31-59

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of George Appleton (1902 – 1993).

(Archbishop of Perth. Archbishop of Jerusalem)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

- Spirit of God, brooding over the formless world:
 Brood over my spirit.
- Spirit of God, form to the formless:
 Fashion my spirit
- Spirit of God, bringing order out of chaos:

Order my spirit.
 O Spirit of God, giving life to the lifeless:
 Give life to my spirit.
 O Spirit of God, inspiration of the prophets:
 Speak to my spirit.
 O Holy Spirit, author of holiness:
 Sanctify my spirit.
 O Holy Spirit, knowing the deep things of God:
 Move in the depths of my being.

Fire of the Spirit! Burn all that is not holy.
 Fire of the Spirit! Shine with thy light.
 Fire of the Spirit! Kindle with thy warmth.
 Fire of the Spirit! Generate in us power.
 Fire of the Spirit! Inflame us with love.

Wind of the Spirit! Breathe in us thy gentleness.
 Wind on the Spirit! Blow in thy strength.

Amen.

Benediction

Go equipped by His Grace,
 Surrounded by Salvation's Walls.
 Let nothing shake your sure repose,
 For no man has laid such a firm foundation,
 Other than the One, which is laid,
 which is Christ Jesus the Lord.

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 3:11

Hymn Reference

Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken, John Newton (1725–1807); TH p. 345

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Eyre, S. D. (1995). *Drawing close to God: the essentials of a dynamic quiet time: a lifeguide resource*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

From chapter 6: Getting Alone with God

If you are like me, getting up in the morning to have a quiet time is difficult. I found it easier to get up for a class when I was in college or, these days, an early-morning breakfast meeting than getting out of bed for a quiet time. We may tell ourselves that we struggle with a consistent morning quiet time because we don't want to get out of bed. However, I believe that the real issue is that we avoid being alone—whether it's morning, afternoon or evening. When I get up for a class or a breakfast meeting, I am spending time with people. When I get up to have a quiet time, I am spending time alone.

For most of us, being alone and loneliness go hand in hand, and loneliness is painful. Psychiatrists and clinical psychologists speak about it as the most frequently expressed complaint. Listening to the radio, I sometimes think that most of the songs could be summarized by the phrase “Please don’t leave me alone.” Generation X is described as “a generation alone.” They have had to face the consequences of baby boomer parents’ struggles to stay together in a culture of marital turbulence and two-income consumerism. The experience of growing up for them has brought a sense of growing up alone.

From the root of loneliness comes destructive fruit. On one extreme, there is the loneliness of the addict who seeks to kill the pain with drugs. On the other, there is the loneliness of a TV watcher who stares at a screen and makes no real personal contacts. In an attempt to cope with the pain of loneliness we may work harder, play harder, perhaps drink or take drugs, and rush into relationships that offer the potential of intimacy, but in the end fail to deliver.

Despite what we may think, loneliness and being alone are not synonymous. Loneliness is being alone and experiencing an inner emptiness. The other side of loneliness is solitude. Solitude is being alone with an inner fullness. If we are to have regular quiet times, we must learn to move from loneliness to solitude.

What Is Solitude?

Solitude is being alone on purpose. Loneliness happens to you. A child who can’t find friends to play with, a rejected lover, a new person in town—these are lonely situations. In contrast, solitude is something you choose. When I put on my running shoes and head out the door, I am choosing to be alone. I am looking forward to the benefits that come from the exercise and the opportunity to let my mind roam free as I pass by a lake, glimpse the squirrels and duck under tree branches. I am alone, but I am not lonely.

For introverted people the choice for solitude is fairly easy. Their temperament inclines them to get away from people. For extroverts being alone is almost unthinkable, because they draw energy from being with people. Solitude is important for extroverts, but it comes at a greater cost and must be managed in small doses.

Solitude is being alone for personal growth and accomplishment. As a high-school student, I hated to spend time in my room doing homework. My grades suffered. When I got to college, it was study or perish. I found time to get to the library. Alone, away from my friends and other distractions, I actually began to get passable grades and learn a few things.

Those who are successful learn how to be alone. Whether it is an artist with a canvas, an author staring at a page, a teacher making out a lesson plan or a businessperson reviewing accounts, they know that certain things must be done alone. From that time alone a painting can be put on public display, a book may be published that many will read, a teacher can stand in front of a class, or an accounting can be given to the stockholders and the board of directors.

Solitude is being alone for personal renewal and refreshment. Being mildly extroverted, I like being with people. But after a day of counseling and meetings I am exhausted. I need time in the evening alone before I am ready to face another day.

One of the problems with our world is that it is difficult to be alone. We have phones in our cars so that we can talk while we drive. And then there is the radio. When we come home, there is the television. This continual exposure to voices talking or singing at us creates an emotional deficit. In the end we have nothing to give and we seek to take from others who, like us, have little to give.

The soul has power to replenish if given relational space. Going for a walk alone in the woods, taking time by yourself on the back patio in the summer twilight, lying under the stars—these things bring inner renewal. Of course, if we spend time alone while we restlessly wait for others to call or come over, there is no refreshment. We only feel deprived and our energies are further depleted. The benefits come when we choose to be by ourselves.

Solitude is being alone in order to enhance our relationships. Someone has described marriage as two ticks without a dog. Facing each other with a sense of need, marriage partners bring to their marriage a sense of loneliness with the expectation that the other will take it away. We feel this frustration in all of our relationships. The closer the friendship, the greater the expectation and, consequently, the burden. In our loneliness our relationships become greedy and needy, clinging and dependent.

When we are able to choose solitude, something happens to our relationships. Instead of expecting others to give, we have something to give. Our hearts are open to receive however much or little others can give. There is a sense of open freedom and relaxing peace in being together without demands.

Solitude is being alone in order to be with God. Imagine being in a room with a loved one and watching television while other people carry on conversations. If you want to enjoy being together and have a personal conversation of any depth, you have to get up and leave the room. When we choose solitude for quiet time, we are choosing to leave the room to be with our loved One.

When we are alone, we can discern God's presence. Martin Luther wrote, "I do not know it and do not understand it, but sounding from above ringing in my ears I hear what is beyond the thought of Man." As I sit in solitude, I frequently find that inner fullness that wells up from inside and pulls me into a deep sense of communion with God.

In solitude with God, all the other benefits of being alone come together as well. We find a sense of purpose that stimulates our creativity while bringing personal renewal and enhanced relationships. When we add solitude to efforts to set aside a time and place to be with God, we have the necessary framework for a quiet time.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St Basil the Great (329 – 379).

(Bishop of Caesarea)

As I rise from sleep I thank Thee, O Holy Trinity,
 for through Thy great goodness and patience
 Thou wast not angered with me, an idler and sinner,
 nor hast Thou destroyed me in my sins,
 but hast shown Thy usual love for men,
 and when I was prostrate in despair,
 Thou hast raised me to keep the morning watch
 and glorify Thy power.
 And now enlighten my mind's eye
 and open my mouth to study Thy words
 and understand Thy commandments
 and do Thy will and sing to Thee in heartfelt adoration and praise
 Thy Most Holy Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 now and ever, and to the ages of ages.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 8:12-21

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

The God who sent His Son to save,
 From guilt and darkness and the grave,
 be gracious to you and bless you
 And cause His face to shine upon you.

Scripture Reference

Psalm 67:1

Hymn Reference

Give to God Our Immortal Praise, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
 p. 3

Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Exodus 40:17-38
- John 9

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960)

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.
[Adapted into contemporary English]

- You who are the only origin of all that is good and fair and true,
unto you I lift up my soul.
- God, let your Spirit now enter my heart.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let not any room within me be furtively closed to keep you out.
- God, give me power to follow after that which is good.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let there be no secret purpose of evil formed in my mind,
that waits for an opportunity of fulfillment.
- God, bless all my undertakings and cause them to prosper.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not be still holding to some undertakings
on which I dare not ask your blessing.
- God, give me chastity.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not say to myself secretly, 'but not yet', or, 'but not too much'.
- God, bless every member of this household.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not still harbour in my heart
a wrongful feeling of jealousy or bitterness or anger towards any of them.
- God bless my enemies and those who have done me wrong.
Now as I pray this prayer,
let me not still cherish in my heart

the resolve to requite them when occasion offers.
 O God, let your Kingdom come on earth.
 Now as I pray this prayer,
 let me not still be intending to devote my own best hours and years
 to the service of lesser ends.

O Holy Spirit of God, as I rise from these acts of devotion,
 let me not return to evil thoughts and worldly ways,
 but let that mind be in me that was also in Christ Jesus.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

From the God Most High,
 Whose ways are mercy and truth,
 Who leads you to his heavenly throne.
 May He preserve your life according to His promise;
 Keep you from all harm,
 And watch over your life.

Scripture Reference

Psalms 119:107; 121:7

Hymn Reference

Give to God Our Immortal Praise, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
 p. 3

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“Surely He Hath Borne Our Griefs by Handel” \(from Messiah\)](#) and consider the lyrics as you go about your day.

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows!
 He was wounded for our transgressions,
 He was bruised for our iniquities;
 the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.
 The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

-
- What was life-giving today?
 - When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
 - What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
 - What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer for Mission

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Almighty God, we confess how hard it is to be your people.
 You have called us to be the church,
 to continue the mission of Jesus to our lonely and confused world.
 Yet we acknowledge we are more apathetic than active,
 isolated than involved, callous than compassionate,
 obstinate than obedient, legalistic than loving.
 gracious Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive our sins.
 Remove the obstacles preventing us
 from being your representatives to a broken world.
 Awaken our hearts to the promised gift of your indwelling Spirit.
 This we pray in Jesus' powerful name.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:121-128

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May our God who has sworn by Himself
 Upon whose oath you may depend
 Who bears His own on eagle's wind;
 May He strengthen you and help you,
 May He uphold you with His righteous hand.

Scripture Reference

Isaiah 41:10

Hymn Reference

The God of Abraham Praise, Thomas Olivers (1725–1799); TH

p. 34

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Leviticus 19:1-18, 30-37
- John 10:1-21

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Philipp Melanchthon (1497 – 1560).

(Friend of Martin Luther. Lutheran Theologian)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 2-3.

We give you thanks, omnipotent, ever-living God of truth,
eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Creator of heaven and earth, of people, and of all creatures,
Sustainer of all things,
Giver of all life, order and wisdom,
unfailing Source of help;

and to your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
 your Word and eternal Image:
 and to your Holy Spirit,
 with whom you endowed the apostles at Pentecost.

We give thanks to you, O God of holiness, and truth,
 wisdom and goodness, justice and mercy, purity and loving kindness,
 for with goodness and wisdom unmatched
 you revealed yourself to us,
 sending your Son into the world,
 destined to assume human nature and to become a sacrifice for us.

We give thanks to you, O God, for gathering your eternal church,
 for guarding the ministry of your word,
 for granting your Holy Spirit, and for giving everlasting life.
 We thank you, O God, because you gave us all good things,
 because you alleviated and removed the chastisement we justly deserve,
 because you bestowed on us all the blessings of souls and body.
 To you be all glory, honour, praise, and thanksgiving,
 for ever and ever.
 Amen.

Benediction

Now to you who dwell securely under the shadow of God's
 throne,
 And who know the sufficiency of God's arm,
 May you be active in sharing your faith,
 so that you have a full understanding
 of every good thing we have in Christ.

Scripture Reference

Philemon 6

Hymn Reference

Our God Our Help in Ages Past, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
 p. 30

DAILY ACTIVITY – Biography

BIOGRAPHY – Chang Shen⁷

CHINA • MARTYR, 1900.

In 1898, young Emperor Kuang Hsu of China was convinced that Christian moral and social reforms were the only hope of saving his chaotic country. But the secret Boxer Society, afraid that the emperor was about to sell out the country to foreign domination, staged a coup and installed his aunt, Tzu Hsi, as empress of China.

⁷ From: Jackson, D., & Jackson, N. (2005). In *The complete book of Christian heroes: over 200 stories of courageous people who suffered for Jesus* (pp. 75–76). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

The Boxers had legitimate resentments. Foreign money funded the opium trade to millions of addicted Chinese; foreign-built railroads cost many jobs; foreign powers forced China to sign exploitive treaties. But to the Boxers, all foreigners, including Christian missionaries, were responsible for every evil China suffered, including drought and poor crops. They poured lies and distortions into the empress's ear: "Christian missionaries steal Chinese spirits." "Christians gouge out the eyes of our children to use in their medicines." "Foreign blood must be spilled before the gods will send rain."

As the twentieth century dawned, the empress finally issued the edict the Boxers had been waiting for: "By Imperial Command Exterminate the Christian Religion! Death to the Foreign Devils!" The edict unleashed a reign of terror and death known as the Boxer Rebellion. Hundreds of foreign missionaries, Protestant and Catholic and Orthodox, were murdered; others barely escaped with their lives. But Chinese Christians suffered even more. Thirty thousand Chinese Catholics endured mutilation, torture, and death. Two thousand Chinese Protestants suffered the same fate. But each tragedy had its own triumph.

"I Was Blind; Now I See"

His name was Chang Shen, but he was known as "Wu so pu wei te" to his fellow villagers in Manchuria: "One without a particle of good in him." His wife was so fed up with his gambling, thieving, and chasing other women that she took their daughter and left. His failing eyesight soon earned him a new nickname: Blind Chang. "The judgment of the gods," his neighbors clucked.

In 1886, Chang heard about a mission hospital that helped people who had lost their sight. Unable to see, he nonetheless traveled hundreds of miles to get to the hospital—but every bed was taken. Crushed, Chang poured out his story. Moved to pity, the hospital evangelist gave up his own bed. With the help of the mission doctors, Chang's sight was partially restored. But even more, he believed the gospel and joyfully gave his heart to Christ.

"Can I be baptized?" he asked the medical missionary.

"Go home and tell your neighbors that you have changed. I will visit you later and if you are still following Jesus, then I will baptize you."

True to his word, the missionary visited Chang's village five months later—and found hundreds of people eager to hear the gospel after hearing Chang Shen's testimony. By now, nothing could stop Chang from his new calling as a Christian evangelist. Even though his eyesight once again failed, he had nearly memorized the New Testament and much of the Old. He traveled from village to village, preaching to anyone who would listen.

As the Boxer Rebellion spread its tentacles into Manchuria, they were told, "For every Christian you kill, ten will spring up while that man Chang Shen lives. Kill him and you will crush the foreign religion." Hearing that fifty Christians had been rounded up and would be executed if they didn't betray him, Chang boldly strode into the village. "I'll gladly die for them!" he cried.

Three days later he was driven to the local cemetery in an open cart, then forced to kneel. Witnesses heard him cry, "Heavenly Father, receive my spirit!" just before the heavy sword severed his head from his body.

A rumor spread throughout the countryside: "Blind Chang will rise from the dead!" Nervous, the Boxers insisted that the body be burned—then they fled the area. Even in death Chang Shen saved many lives by his powerful witness.

VOICE OF THE HERO

*Jesus loves me, he who died,
heaven's gate to open wide;
he will wash away my sin,
Let his little child come in.*

—SONG SUNG BY CHANG SHEN ON HIS WAY TO HIS EXECUTION

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER**COMPOSE**

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of a Nigerian Christian.

in. George Appleton (ed.), The Oxford book of Prayer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 107.

God in heaven,
you have helped my life to grow like a tree.
Now something has happened.
Satan, like a bird,
has carried in one twig of his own choosing after another.
Before I knew it
he had built a dwelling place and was living in it.
Tonight, my Father,
I am throwing out both the bird and the nest..
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:129-136

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.

-
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
 - Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

To you whose life is hid with Christ on High,
Whoever lives and pleas for you;
May He keep you from stumbling,
And make you to stand in the presence of His glory,
Blameless and with great joy.

Scripture Reference

Jude 24

Week 6

Sunday March 13 – Saturday March 19

Memory Verse for the Week

If the whole passage is too long, then try to memorize just the bolded verse.
Feel free to use another translation if you prefer.

Titus 2:11–14

(English Standard Version)

¹¹ **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,** ¹² **training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,** ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	.....	Sun Mar 13, 10am and 7pm
Morning Prayer	.....	Mon / Wed / Fri, 7-7:45am

Whom would you like to serve or spend time with? Plan and arrange the details.

Sunday

MORNING PRAYER

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is the ancient practice of opening our whole being – body, mind and spirit – to an awareness of God’s abiding presence. It is quiet but active, restful but attentive, intentional but not goal-oriented. It is making real in our experience God’s love “poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5)

It takes practice and patience and cannot be pursued as another spiritual milestone. It is a life-practice where the fruit is often experienced outside of the practice itself. Just a physical exercise may be tough in the doing, and yet we carry the benefits with us through our day, so is contemplative (or centering) prayer. Have no goal in mind. It may feel like nothing has happened. It takes a lot of practice and patience. Persevere. Simply showing up already expresses a desire for God and He will respond to your invitation.

Silence is a significant part of contemplative prayer. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). There is a hearing and seeing beyond words as we find release in opening up our unconscious mind and the depth of our souls to God.

Planning & Preparation:

- Plan initially for 15-20 minutes. (It’s a good idea to set a timer and then forget about the clock).
- Sit up straight with body relaxed, or kneel with body supported. Choose a posture that will not distract you (too uncomfortable) or make you doze off (too comfortable).
- Be in a quiet space without distractions.
- Consider having a ‘sacred’ object (cross, Bible, photo, icon, etc) in easy view. It may be helpful.

The Exercise:

1. Choose a ‘sacred’ word or phrase.
 - a. In a short time of prayer ask the Holy Spirit to give you a sacred word or phrase.
 - b. Use one that readily comes to mind (don’t search for the “perfect” one). Examples: “joy”, “good shepherd”, “grace”, “comforter”, “prince of peace”, “forgiven”, “with you always”, “Lamb of God”.
2. Softly speak your sacred word or phrase and then be still.
 - a. Dwell in God’s presence.
 - b. Fellowship is presence not talk. (Like enjoying a view with a friend.)
3. Abide. Let God’s presence touch you.
 - a. Let normal thoughts and feelings come. Don’t try to ‘empty’ your mind, but don’t let a particular thought take over.
 - b. Feel your soul letting go. (Do not go searching for thoughts or feelings.) Wait. Rest.

-
- c. Let Jesus lift any weight off your soul – fear, frustration, disappointment, desire, sadness, loneliness, anger, . . . Give it over. (Do not analyze, rationalize or sentimentalize.)
 - d. Enjoy, don't strive. Let joy and peace in. Smile at good thoughts and feelings.
 - e. Let go of tightness in your face and body. Breathe rhythmically. Release your limbs. Let God's peace spread to your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs, ...
 - f. If you doze, or your thoughts wander unhelpfully, return gently with your sacred word. (Don't use it repetitively like a mantra.)
 - g. If images crowd your mind look at your sacred object and slow your mind. Be attentive.
 - h. Experience gentleness. Receive grace. (Like enjoying a gentle breeze, or the warmth of a bath.)
4. When the timer rings, end by thoughtfully praying the Lord's Prayer.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10AM & 7PM

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of a young Ghanaian Christian.

In. George Appleton (ed.), The Oxford book of Prayer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 153.

On your last days on earth
you promised to leave us the Holy Spirit as our present comforter.

We also know that your Holy Spirit blows over this earth.
 But we do not understand him.
 Many think he is only wind or a feeling.
 Let your Holy Spirit break into our lives.
 Let him come like blood into our veins,
 so that we will be driven entirely by your will.
 Let your Spirit blow over wealthy Europe and North America,
 so that men there will be humble
 Let him blow over the poor parts of the world,
 so that men there need suffer no more.
 Let him blow over Africa,
 so that men here may understand what true freedom is.
 There are a thousand voices and spirits in this world,
 but we want to hear only your voice,
 and be open only to your Spirit.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:137-144

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May He Who breaks the power of canceled sin
 and sets the prisoner free,
 Whose blood can make the foulest clean;
 May he increase your understanding
 so that you may know Him who is true,
 and that you are in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Scripture Reference

1 John 5:20

Hymn Reference

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing, Charles Wesley (1707–1788); TH
p. 164

Monday

MORNING PRAYER

March 14

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Numbers 6
- John 10:22-42

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

Prayer of Dr Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

(Baptist Pastor. Human Rights Activist. Martyr)

Thou Eternal God,
 out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence
 the whole universe has come into being,
 we humbly confess that we have not loved thee
 with our hearts, souls and minds,
 and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us.
 We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses
 rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ.
 We often give in order to receive.
 We love our friends and hate our enemies.
 We go the first mile but dare not travel the second.
 We forgive but dare not forget.
 And so as we look within ourselves,
 we are confronted with the appalling fact that the history of our lives
 is the history of an eternal revolt against you.
 But thou, O God, have mercy upon us.
 Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be.
 Give us the intelligence to know your will.
 Give us the courage to do your will.
 Give us the devotion to love your will.
 In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

And now may Christ,
Who is adored in the highest heaven,
The everlasting Lord,
the Prince of Peace and Sun of Righteousness,
Fill you with the knowledge of his will
through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Scripture Reference

Colossians 1:9

Hymn Reference

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Charles Wesley (1707–1788);
TH p. 203

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1992), 47-50, 75.

Viktor E. Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist who survived the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. After his release he sought to make sense out of this experience and published his reflections in the book *Man's Search for Meaning*. In the book he sought to explain why some survived while others gave up in despair and died. He also saw that some of the people in the camps became self-centered individuals who cared only about their own personal welfare. Their code was the survival of the fittest. Others in the exact same circumstances exhibited great generosity of spirit, comforting others, sharing the little they had, and caring for those worse off than themselves. Frankl sought to explain why people in the same situation ended up so different from one another. Below is an excerpt for reflection.

In spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of the life in a concentration camp, it was possible for spiritual life to deepen. Sensitive people who were used to a rich life of intellectual life may have suffered much pain (they were often of a delicate constitution), but the damage to their inner selves was less. They were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom... In order to make myself clear, I am forced to fall back on personal experience. Let me tell what happened on those early mornings when we had to march to our work site...

We stumbled on in the darkness, over big stones and through large puddles, along the one road leading from the camp. The accompanying guards kept shouting at us and driving us with the butts of their rifles. Anyone with very sore feet supported himself on his neighbor's arm. Hardly a word was spoken; the icy wind did not encourage talk. Hiding his mouth behind his upturned collar, the man marching next to me whispered suddenly: "If our wives could see us now! I do hope they are better off in their camps and don't know what is happening to us."

That brought thoughts of my own wife to mind. And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and

onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking of his wife. Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise.

A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of man is through love and in love*. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved... For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, "The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory."...

My mind still clung to the image of my wife. A thought crossed my mind: I didn't even know if she were still alive. I knew only one thing – which I have learned well by now: Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance...

Seen from this point of view, the mental reactions of the inmates of a concentration camp must seem more to us than the mere expression of certain physical and sociological conditions. Even though conditions such as lack of sleep, insufficient food and various mental stress may suggest that the inmates were bound to react in certain ways, in the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what will become of him – mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp...

Passage for Reflection (Mark 15:16-26):

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How does the first paragraph in the excerpt from *Man's Search for Meaning* parallel the passage from Mark's Gospel? In what ways are they similar... different? Where was God in these stories?

2. Describe your “inner self”? The Bible says our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Consider your inner riches from God. How has He comforted and strengthened you with these gifts?
3. Frankl came to the conclusion that ‘*the salvation of man was through love and in love*’. What does this mean for you? How do you render these words? See Romans 5:8.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God’s presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit’s comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another’s?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St Basil the Great (329 – 379).

(Bishop of Caesarea)

As I rise from sleep I thank Thee, O Holy Trinity,
 for through Thy great goodness and patience
 Thou wast not angered with me, an idler and sinner,
 nor hast Thou destroyed me in my sins,
 but hast shown Thy usual love for men,
 and when I was prostrate in despair,
 Thou hast raised me to keep the morning watch
 and glorify Thy power.
 And now enlighten my mind's eye
 and open my mouth to study Thy words
 and understand Thy commandments
 and do Thy will and sing to Thee in heartfelt adoration and praise
 Thy Most Holy Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 now and ever, and to the ages of ages.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 11:1-8

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May He who is ris'n with healing in His wings,
Who brings light and life to all,
Who was born that man no more die;
Restore to you the joy of your salvation
and sustain you with a willing spirit.

Scripture Reference

Psalm 51:12

Hymn Reference

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Charles Wesley (1707–1788);

TH p. 203

Tuesday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Numbers 11:10-33
- John 11:1-44

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of Soren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855).

(Danish philosopher and theologian.)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

We have our treasure in earthen vessels,
but thou, O Holy Spirit, when thou livest in a man,
thou livest in what is infinitely lower.
Thou Spirit of Holiness,
thou livest in the midst of impurity and corruption;

thou Spirit of wisdom, thou livest in the midst of folly;
 thou Spirit of truth, thou livest in one who is himself deluded.
 Oh, continue to dwell there,
 thou who dost not seek a desirable dwelling place,
 for thou wouldst seek there in vain, thou Creator and Redeemer,
 to make a dwelling for thyself;
 oh, continue to dwell there,
 that one day thou mayest finally be pleased by the dwelling
 which thou didst thyself prepare in my heart,
 foolish, deceiving, and impure as it is.
 Amen

Benediction

May the Mighty One Who has done great things,
 And whose mercy goes on from generation to generation,
 When life's perils confound you;
 May his counsel guide you and beneath his wings protect
 you,
 And may God be with you till we meet again.

Scripture Reference

Luke 1:49, 50

Hymn Reference

God Be with You Till We Meet Again, Jeremiah E. Rankin (1828–1904); TH p. 385

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Appreciating the World Around You

*Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil;
 and whatever one has taught or the other has learned
 has come from God - the Teacher of the teacher.*
 - Tertullian, 2nd c.

Go for a walk today and spend time appreciating everything that you encounter. Thank God for the beauty of creation, pray for the people you see, for the neighbourhood, and for our city.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.
- Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?
- What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?
- How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546).

(Theologian and reformer)

In. Owen Collins (ed.) *Classic Christian Prayers*, New York, Testament Books, 1999. p. 111.

My heavenly Father, I thank you through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son,
that you have protected me by your grace.
Forgive, I pray, all my sins and the evil I have done.
Protect me by your grace, tonight.
I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have.
Let your holy angels be with me,
so that the evil enemy may not triumph over me.
Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:145-152

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May He who is full of kindness and compassion,
Who is slow to anger, vast in love;
Whose works of love are of surpassing measure
Keep you in the unity of the Spirit through the bond of
peace.

Scripture Reference

Ephesians 4:3

Hymn Reference

God, my King, Thy Might Confessing, Richard Mant (1776–1848); TH p. 5

Wednesday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33
- John 11:45-57

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SUPPLICATION

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Prayer of Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536)

(Dutch Theologian)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 52.

[Adapted into modern English]

O Lord Jesus Christ,
 the maker and redeemer of mankind
 who said you are the way, the truth and the life:
 the way by doctrine, precepts and examples;
 the truth, in promises;
 and the life, in reward;
 I beseech you for your unspeakable love's sake,
 through which you have granted to employ yourself wholly for our salvation,
 allow me not at any time to stray from you, who are the way;
 nor to distrust your promises, which are the truth,
 for you fulfill whatever you promise;
 nor to rest in anything other than you, who are the life,
 beyond whom there is nothing to be desired,
 neither in heaven or earth.
 From you we have learned the sure and ready way to true salvation,
 with the intent that we should not wander any longer
 up and down in the mazes of the world.
 You have taught us thoroughly
 what to believe,
 what to do,
 what to hope,
 and where to find rest.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May the God who's watchful eye never sleeps;
The God of wonders, power and love;
May He keep your feet from falling,
And make your thanks endless be,
Until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be
revealed in the last time.

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 1:5

Hymn Reference

All Praise to God Who Reigns Above, Johann J. Schütz (1640–1690); TH p. 4

DAILY ACTIVITY

Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Man of Sorrows*, oil on panel, 1495

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. – Isaiah 53:3-5

The “Man of Sorrows” image was a common theme in Northern and Western Europe from the 13th century through the Renaissance. This image, and others like it, was produced for meditation and is not a literal depiction of the Biblical account: all that Jesus went through is put into this one painting. Note how Jesus carries his cross while sweating blood and bleeding from his spear wound. Angels hold some of the instruments of his suffering behind him, and mourners are in front of him. Jesus is standing in a grave, demonstrating how he is both dead and alive – dead, as the Son of Man died that day, and alive, as the Son of God rose on the third day.

1. This painting was made for meditation. Take time to meditate on the pain and suffering that Jesus went through that day, culminating in his death, to save you from your sins.
2. Jesus truly looks full of sorrow in this painting. What do you think is the source of his sorrow?
3. It says in Isaiah that Jesus was despised, rejected, and held in low esteem, and this painting shows the physical pain he endured. How does this influence the way we worship our Lord and Saviour?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

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- What was life-draining today?
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CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Celtic Prayer from Iona.

In. J. Philip Newell, *Celtic Prayers from Iona*, New York, Paulist Press, 1997. p. 39

There is no plant in the ground, but tells of your beauty, O Christ.

There is no creature on the earth,
 there is no life in the sea, but proclaims your goodness.
 There is no bird on the wing, there is no star in the sky,
 there is nothing beneath the sun, but is full of your blessing.
 Lighten my understanding of your presence all around, O Christ,
 kindle my will to be caring for your creation.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 12:1-8

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the God whose robe is light,
 Whose canopy is space,
 Whose mercies are tender and firm to the end.
 Show you such love so that you will say with the
 psalmist,
 You are my lamp, O LORD;
 the LORD turns my darkness into light.

Scripture Reference

2 Samuel 22:29

Hymn Reference

O Worship the King, Robert Grant (1778–1838); TH p. 2

Thursday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Numbers 16:1-35
- John 12:1-19

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of St Basil the Great (329 – 379).

(Bishop of Caesarea.)

Almighty Lord, God of the Powers and of all flesh,
 Who lives in the highest and cares for the humble,
 Who searches our hearts and affections, and clearly foreknows the secrets of men;
 eternal and everliving Light, in Whom is no change nor shadow of variation;
 O Immortal King, receive our prayers
 which at the present time we offer to you from unclean lips,
 trusting in the multitude of your mercies.

Forgive all sins committed by us in thought, word or deed, consciously or unconsciously,
 and cleanse us from all defilement of flesh and spirit.
 Grant us to pass the night of the whole present life
 with wakeful heart and sober thought,
 ever expecting the coming of the radiant day
 of the appearing of your only-begotten Son,
 our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
 when the Judge of all will come with glory
 to render to each according to their deeds.
 May we not be found fallen and idle, but awake and alert for action,
 ready to accompany Him into the joy and divine palace of His glory,
 where there is the ceaseless sound of those keeping festival
 and the unspeakable delight of those who behold the ineffable beauty of your Face.
 For you are the true Light that enlightens and sanctifies all,
 and all creation sings to you throughout the ages.
 Amen.

Benediction

Now may the Lord who made the heavens,
 even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts,
 the earth and all that is on it,
 the seas and all that is in them,
 Who gives life to everything
 and Who is worshipped by the multitudes of heavenly
 hosts.
 May that Lord by His eternal spirit,
 by His all-sufficient merit,
 Raise you up to his glorious throne.

Scripture Reference

Nehemiah 9:6

Hymn Reference

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, Charles Wesley (1707–1788); TH p. 196

DAILY ACTIVITY – Reading

Campbell, K. (1996). *Those ugly emotions: how to manage your emotions* (pp. 11–13). Ross-shire, GB: Christian Focus Publications.

Introduction.

Do you feel guilty when you experience negative emotions? Do your feelings ever cause you to do something you strongly regret? Does conflict rage between your beliefs and your emotions? Do your feelings get in the way of your growth in holiness?

If so, cheer up—you are perfectly normal!

Understanding our negative emotions and knowing what to do about them has always been a problem for Christians as well as for unbelievers. Christians cannot accept some current ideas about emotions, such as ‘if it feels good, do it’. We cannot go along with the new age theology that tells us

that feelings are always good, are at least neutral, and so we should ‘follow our feelings’. The solution to negative emotions is not ‘getting in touch with the inner child’, whatever that means. Nor can we accept the notion that knowledge and insight come from the instincts rather than from the mind. On the basis of the Word of God (not to mention our own experience), we know that our emotions are affected by sin just as much as our minds and bodies.

On the other hand, we do not wish to go to the opposite extreme and assert that all human emotions are intrinsically evil; feelings are no more evil than the mind or the body. But like the mind and the body, human feelings can be the occasion of sin. Emotions can be and often are the root that bears the fruit of sinful actions in our lives. When I use the term ‘negative emotions’ in this book I mean those emotions which often are the occasion of wrong behavior on our part, but which do not have to be.

But what are we to do? Generally, believers have tended to err in one of two ways. Some have believed that the Christian should suppress his negative feelings, preventing them from surfacing and causing problems. Like the Victorian Englishman, he should ‘keep a stiff upper lip’. Such folk usually appear cold and withdrawn and have difficulty with personal relationships. The other extreme is to just ‘let it out’. Since feelings are ‘only natural’, they should be openly and fully expressed. Once you vent them, you can carry on with your life as before. Such people are often unaware of the hurt they cause to others by the unrestrained expression of their negative emotions.

The Psalms of the Old Testament, most of which are about human emotions, offer us a third way to manage our emotions; one that is more effective than either of the above and actively helps us to grow in our knowledge of God. The Psalms present no magic solutions or quick fixes, but they do offer the prospect of steady growth in spiritual maturity. In the Psalms we see that our negative feelings are both warnings and opportunities.

Most of the psalms are about human emotions. John Calvin said that all human emotions are described in the Old Testament psalms: ‘There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.’

God graciously gave us the Psalms to help us deal wisely with our own emotions. Even some therapists who do not regard the Bible as the written Word of God often use psalms to help ‘disturbed’ people, because they are so realistic and encouraging.

The humanist thinking that permeates our society claims that our feelings are good and reliable. If it feels good to you, go with it, follow your feelings, feelings cannot be wrong. This is a serious mistake. Some emotions are harmful to others, and some are also harmful to oneself. The seven emotions discussed in this book that can be harmful are fear, depression, anger, guilt, hatred, envy and jealousy, and grief.

The person who learns and practices the pattern of handling negative feelings that the Psalms offer us will experience the long-term joy that the psalmists knew. This does not come easily, but it is the only way of honoring God with our emotional nature.

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of George Appleton (1902 – 1993).

(Archbishop of Perth. Archbishop of Jerusalem.)

In. George Appleton (ed.), *The Oxford book of Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p 154.

Lord, my heart is not large enough,
 my memory is not good enough,
 my will is not strong enough:
 Take my heart and enlarge it,
 Take my memory and give it quicker recall,
 Take my will and make it strong
 and make me conscious of thee
 everpresent,
 ever accompanying.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:153-160

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the One Who makes the vapors
 ascend in clouds from earth's remotest end,
 Whose lightnings flash at His commands,
 Who holds the tempest in His hands.
 Keep you from being ineffective and unproductive
 in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture Reference

2 Peter 1:8

Hymn Reference

Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim, Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–
1809); TH 12

Friday

MORNING PRAYER

SUSTENANCE

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

Read:

- Numbers 20
- John 12:20-50

Look:

- INWARD: Are there things you learn about people (Yourself, Others, Evildoers, ...)?
- OUTWARD: Are there truths for daily life (Promises, warnings, affirmations, ...)?
- UPWARD: Are there things you learn about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

What is the Spirit saying to you today?

SORROW

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. (Psalm 16:4)

A Prayer of Repentance

The Worship Sourcebook (2nd Ed.), Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, & Baker books, Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2013.

Holy God, we confess that we have not lived as you have taught us.
 We have put our longing for money, success, or happiness
 above our desire for you and your kingdom.
 We worry about what others will think, what we wear,
 how our reputation can be polished.
 We make idols out of the winning record of a sports team,
 the next promotion at work, the perfect family,
 the cleanliness of our house, or the latest technology.
 We are careless with our words, saying things we don't mean,
 things that are hurtful to our children or friends.
 We are so busy with our lives
 that we forget our every breath depends on you.
 While we waste our time on meaningless activities,
 we fail to recognize moments of grace throughout our day.
 We indulge in hateful thoughts against those we feel have offended us,
 and we are indifferent toward the suffering in our own neighbourhoods.
 We forget that all people bear your image.
 In an effort to look better, we compare ourselves to others.
 We take advantage of weakness and are passive in the face of injustice.
 For personal gain and reputation, we lie blatantly, and we lie by omission.
 We would rather blame others unjustly than accept fault.
 We long for what is not ours and begrudge the blessings of others.
 Forgive us for thinking of ourselves before others and before you.

Free us from unreasonable expectations of ourselves and others,
 From the need to compete, and from loss of perspective
 so that we glorify you in all we think, say, and do.
 Amen.

STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

May He Who has revealed to every nation
 His everlasting righteousness,
 Who sits enthroned in ageless splendor,
 Rule in your hearts
 since as members of one body you were called to
 peace.

Scripture Reference

Colossians 3:15

Hymn Reference

New Songs of Celebration Render, Erik Routley (1917–1982);
 TH p. 14

DAILY ACTIVITY – Musical Reflection

Listen and reflect on [“Mercy by Phil Wickham”](#) and consider the lyrics as you go about the day.

Made from the dust and breathed into life
 He stood unashamed with a fire in His eyes
 The image of God walking upon the world
 All of the earth was under His feet
 Except for the fruit from a forbidden tree
 He took a taste and that's how he breaks the world

He cried mercy, mercy
 He broke the whole world with the fruit of a tree
 Have mercy

Heaven to earth came down from on high
 With hope in His Name and a fire in His eyes
 The fullness of God walking upon the world
 He said He was love then proved it with blood
 And rose from the dead to prove He was God
 And that's what it takes for one man to save the world

Oh such mercy, mercy
He saved the whole world when He hung on a tree
Such mercy

Now here inside of our skin and bones
Heaven above is making it's home
The kingdom of God living upon the world
To love like He loves and give like He gives
To tell the story that makes dead men live
And that's what it takes if we're gonna change the world

Mercy, mercy
Your love is a song and You sing over me
Mercy

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St Aethelwold. (908-984)

(Nobleman. Monk. Bishop of Winchester.)

May God the Father bless us;
may Christ take care of us;
the Holy Ghost enlighten us all the days of our life.
The Lord be our defender
and keeper of body and soul,
both now and forever, to the ages of ages.

Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Proverbs 15:1-10

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May you dwell under the shadow of God's throne,
Where saints have dwelt secure,
Where His arm is sufficient and your defense is sure.
And may you be wise like the conies
who, though small, make their houses in the crags of
the rocks
and are safe from all predators.

Scripture Reference

Proverbs 30:26

Hymn Reference

Our God Our Help in Ages Past, Isaac Watts (1674–1748); TH
p. 30

Saturday

MORNING PRAYER

LECTIO DIVINA

Preparation

Silence. Where are you? Where is God? What is on your heart? Come into His presence.

Lectio

Read:

- Numbers 22:36 – 23:26
- John 13

Focussing on one passage or section, note words that stirred something in you.

Meditation

Look at the word/s you have written. Examine them.

- What message are they bringing? Is it a thought or mood?
- Examine your life. Why was your spirit stirred?
- Try to keep focussed on the most significant issue.
- What is God saying to you? What other Scriptures come to mind?
- What have you heard or seen that speaks into what God might be saying?
- How will God's Word change who you are, what you do, how you think, what you say, . . . ?

Contemplation

God has spoken. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun).

Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnation

Consider one way you will build what the Spirit has spoken into your life.

Prayer

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.

Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."

Listen.

Prayer of John Baillie (1886 – 1960).

(Scottish Minister and Theologian)

In. John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1936. p. 13.

[Adapted into contemporary English]

Almighty and eternal God, you are hidden from my sight:
 You are beyond the understanding of my mind:
 Your thoughts are not as my thoughts:
 Your ways are past finding out.

Yet have you have breathed your Spirit into my spirit:
Yet have you have formed my mind to seek you:
Yet have you have inclined my heart to love you:
Yet have you have made me restless for the rest that is in you:
Yet have you planted within me a hunger and thirst
that make me dissatisfied with all the joys of earth.

O Lord God, I praise and magnify your name
that thus you have set your seal upon my inmost being,
not leaving me to my own poor and petty selfhood
or to the sole empire of animal passion and desire,
but calling me to be an heir of your eternal Kingdom.
I bless you for that knocking at my heart's door
that warns me of your waiting presence.
I bless you for your hand upon my life,
and for the sure knowledge that, however I may falter and fail,
yet underneath are your everlasting arms.

O you who alone knows what lies before me this day,
grant that in every hour of it I may stay close to you.
Let me be in the world but not of it.
Let me use the world without abusing it.
If I buy let me be as though I do not possess.
If I have nothing, let me be as though possessing all things.
Let me today embark on no undertaking that is not in line with your will for my life,
nor shrink from any sacrifice which your will may demand.
Suggest, direct, control every movement of my mind;
for my Lord Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

Benediction

May the God Who changes not,
Who has no shadow of turning,
And Whose compassions fail not,
Preserve you by His loving kindness,
So that you might know,
Great are His faithful acts, they are new every
morning.

Scripture Reference

Lamentations 3:22, 23

Hymn Reference

Great is Thy Faithfulness, Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960);
TH p. 32

DAILY ACTIVITY – Biography
BIOGRAPHY – Harriet Beecher Stowe⁸

(1811 – 1896)

 AUTHOR OF *UNCLE TOM’S CABIN*

“[Uncle Tom’s Cabin is] perhaps the most influential novel ever published, a verbal earthquake, an ink-and-paper tidal wave.”

—one of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s critics

When President Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1863, he is reported to have said, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!”

Uncle Tom’s Cabin may not have caused the Civil War, but it shook both North and South. It declared the profound value of a human soul and made emancipation inevitable. Susan Bradford wrote, after her state of Florida seceded, “If Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe had died before she wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, this would never have happened.... Isn’t it strange how much harm a pack of lies can do?”

Absurdity of slavery

Harriet was the seventh of 12 children of Lyman Beecher, Congregationalist minister, noted revivalist and reformer. When Harriet’s mother lay dying, Lyman repeatedly spoke words to her that the family embraced as their life text, often repeating it to one another: “... Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” The noble thought embedded in these words would energize the unanswerable argument *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* proclaimed: if a slave can come to Mount Sion and to Jesus and to the company of saints in the New Jerusalem, how can you set him up on an auction block and trade him from one white man to another?

In 1832 her father moved the family to the frontier city of Cincinnati, where he became president of Lane Seminary, soon a center for abolitionists. At 25 Harriet married Calvin Ellis Stowe, professor of biblical literature at Lane.

Writing and mothering

During her child-rearing years, she read to her seven children two hours each evening and, for a time, ran a small school in her home. She described herself as “a little bit of a woman, just as thin and dry as a pinch of snuff; never very much to look at in my best days and very much used-up by now, a mere drudge with few ideas beyond babies and housekeeping.”

But a mere drudge she was not. She found time to write, partially to bolster the meager family income. An early literary success at age 32 (for a collection of short stories) encouraged her, but she still worried about the conflict between writing and mothering. Despite privation and anxiety, due largely to her husband’s precarious health, she wrote continually and in 1843 published *The Mayflower; or, Sketches of Scenes and Characters Among the Descendants of the Pilgrims*. Her husband urged her

⁸ From: Galli, M., & Olsen, T. (2000). Introduction. In *131 Christians everyone should know* (pp. 118–120). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

on, predicting she could mold “the mind of the West for the coming generation.” That she did with the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or Life Among the Lowly* at age 40.

She had lived for 18 years in Cincinnati, separated only by the Ohio River from a slave-holding community in Kentucky; she gained firsthand knowledge of fugitive slaves and about life in the South from friends and through her contact with the “Underground Railroad” there. The secret network was started in defiance of the “Fugitive Slave Acts” (severe measures passed the year before that mandated the return of runaway slaves without trial) to help escaped slaves reach safety in the North or in Canada. Stowe herself helped some slaves escape.

But Stowe still brooded over how she could further respond. Then, during a church Communion service, the scene of the triumphant death of Tom flashed before her. She soon formed the story that preceded Tom’s death.

Million copy bestseller

In 1850 her husband became professor at Bowdoin College and moved his family to Brunswick, Maine. In Brunswick, Stowe wrote the story of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for serial publication in the *National Era*, an antislavery paper of Washington, D.C., in 1851 and 1852 in 40 installments, each with a cliffhanger ending. Her name became anathema in the South. But elsewhere the book had an unparalleled popularity; it was translated into at least 23 languages. When it appeared in book form, it sold 1,000,000 copies before the Civil War. The dramatic adaptation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* played to capacity audiences. Stowe reinforced her story with *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1853), in which she accumulated a large number of documents and testimonies against slavery.

Its publication also inspired a reaction from the South: critical reviews and the publication of some 30 anti-abolitionist *Uncle Tom* novels within three years.

By literary standards, the novel’s situations are contrived, the dialogue unreal, and the slaves romanticized. Still, Stowe communicated the absurdity of slavery through Tom’s triumph over the brutal evil of Simon Legree.

“‘How would ye like to be tied to a tree, and have a slow fire lit up around ye?’ asked Legree. ‘Wouldn’t that be pleasant, eh, Tom?’

“‘Mas’r,’ said Tom, ‘I know ye can do dreadful things, but’—he stretched himself upward and clasped his hands—‘but after ye’ve killed the body, there ain’t no more ye can do. And oh! there’s all eternity to come after that!’ ”

Until her death in July 1896, Stowe averaged nearly a book a year, but *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was her legacy. Even one of her harshest critics acknowledged that it was “perhaps the most influential novel ever published, a verbal earthquake, an ink-and-paper tidal wave.”

She thereafter led the life of a woman of letters, writing novels, of which *The Minister’s Wooing* (1859) is best known, and many studies of social life in both fiction and essay. Stowe published also a small volume of religious poems and toward the end of her career gave some public readings from her writings.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Privately reflect, journal and/or share with a friend or family member.

Spend some time reflecting on this past week. What was it like to sacrifice your normal routine?

What was particularly difficult about it? What was surprisingly easy?

How might God use such a sacrifice to build your relationship with Him?

EVENING PRAYER

COMPOSE

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

- What was life-giving today?
- When/where did you sense God's presence and work?
- What refreshed, lifted and excited your soul?
- What made God seem nearer?

DESOLATION. A basis for seeking the Spirit's comfort, repentance, re-orientation.

- What was life-draining today?
- When/where did you feel alone, far from God?
- What was stressful, joyless, dark, fearful?
- Was there evil or sin – mine or another's?

CONNECT

Pray through what God has revealed to you or laid on your heart – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance.

Prayer of St. Augustine (354 – 430).

(Bishop of Hippo)

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
 Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
 Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
 Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
 Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.
 Amen.

CONSIDER

Read Psalm 119:161-176

- Let these words challenge or affirm what you believe.
- Let these words shed light on the choices you made today.
- Let these words strengthen your convictions and change your approach to life.

CONSOLE

May the only One Who grants pardon for sin
 and a peace that endures,
 And Whose own presence guides and cheers,
 Strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Scripture Reference

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Hymn Reference

Great is Thy Faithfulness, Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960);
TH p. 32

Holy Week

Palm Sunday

Sunday March 20

Pot-Luck Lunch, 12pm – Let's celebrate the end of the season of Lent and entry into Holy Week with a feast! Please bring a food item to share that will feed approximately six people.

Holy Week Readings – Pick up Holy Week readings from church.

Maundy Thursday

Thursday March 24

Tenebrae Service, 7:30pm – Using music, art and the movement from light to darkness, this powerful "Service of the Shadows" takes us through Jesus' last hours before he faces the cross.

Good Friday

Friday March 25

Stations of the Cross, 10:00am – In an ancient and deeply contemplative service we will walk through Jesus' suffering on the day he died, with images, readings and prayers. The service ends with Holy Communion.

Easter Sunday

Sunday March 27

Worship Services, 10am & 7pm - Join us for a service celebrating the fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and that He offers grace and peace to us all! Hallelujah! He is risen.