

FOLLOWING JESUS DAY BY DAY

PURE

People

Undergoing

Regeneration

Everyday

PURE

Devotional Ministry

This booklet is written to encourage, support, enrich and guide Jesus' followers, personally or in ministry, in honouring God, but is never, under any circumstances, to be sold or made available for sale. Mistakes in citation and reference are unintentional. Credit for the message contained belongs to the Lord because 'He has done great things' (Joel 2:20). 2023



Our prayer for this devotional booklet is that you would meditate on the thoughts presented here, drawing closer to the Lord in your daily walk, and begin "reflecting the glory of the Lord...being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit". (2 Corinthians 3:18 NET)*

PURE Devotional Ministry

Donations towards the PURE or CURL ministries can be made to

Gelly McAuliffe-Bunker BSB 06 4185 A/c 1010 5409

Please direct any queries to gelly.mcauliffe.bunker@gmail.com

**Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from the ESV translation of the Holy Bible.*



1 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105

As we begin a new devotional, let us begin with God's Word.

The Psalmist tells us that God's Word is a lamp to our feet. What do we understand that to mean?

Firstly, God's Word is lamp for me as I begin to walk. We use our feet for walking. When we first began to walk, we were mightily wobbly. Our steps were uncertain because we were still working out how walking worked.

As new Christians, our first steps can also be quite wobbly. But, as with toddlers, the important step is to begin walking out our faith.

Yes, there will be many stumbles in these early steps. Yes, we will fall over more than once. But let us persevere. How? Let us continue to look to God and turn to His Word.

Pray: Dear God, thank You for Your Word. I commit afresh to reading it regularly and deeply, that I may experience Your lamp to my feet.

2 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105

As new Christians, we need to practice patience with our progress. As toddlers, we may occasionally have suffered bumps or bruises through unsteady steps or miscalculations. With time, our progress became smoother.

Similarly, in our Christian walk, we can experience stumbles and fumbles. These can happen whether we were raised in a good Christian home, only came to recognise Jesus as our Saviour later in life or both were raised in a good Christian home and only came to recognise Jesus as our Saviour much later in life. Our walk with Christ is a transformational journey.

Today, whether you are taking your first step or your one millionth-and-first step, God's *word* is a lamp to your feet (Ps 119:105). Step forward in God's mercy and grace through knowing His Word.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for every blessing that comes through walking according to Your Word.



3 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105

Yesterday we talked about stumbles and fumbles.

We often like to think that those days are behind us. Yet if we truly believe in the transformational work of God in our lives (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 4:16), then we too can experience time of stumbling and fumbling as we walk in our new habits and divest ourselves of the old ones.

This will require us to be patient with ourselves. It might lead to humble recognition that we are not quite as 'perfect' as we would like. Remember, our perfection is in the Lord, and we are growing into that.

Pray: O Mighty God, what patience You have shown with me. Thank You. Thank You for Your kindness and Your grace. Thank You that You are renewing me day by day. I long to be Your more perfect witness.

4 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet" Psalm 119:105

Today as we join with others in celebrating freedom, let us remember our freedom in Christ (Gal 5:1).

Through Jesus, we have experienced freedom. Let us praise God as we rejoice in this freedom. It is not because of anything that we have done. God, in His kindness and grace, has simply offered us this freedom. Our part is to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, and to live out of that freedom in our daily choices.

This is not a freedom to take what God offers and live any way we want. It is a freedom to accept what God offers in Jesus, and to live in all the fullness of all God promises, in faithful and humble obedience.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You that You so loved the world that You sent Jesus to bring about reconciliation for lost and broken sinners.



“Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

~ Matt 6:9



5 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet" Psalm 119:105

God's Word is *"a lamp to my feet"* (Ps 119:105), and teaches me about the God who so loved the world (John 3:16). We recognise our own stumbling ways. Are we as quick to show grace to others who stumble?

God sent Jesus because we *"all have sinned"* (Rom 3:23). *"All"* includes you and me, and that person before you today.

Let us be willing to offer grace and freedom to others going through fumbles and struggles. God placed around us those who showed grace when we stumbled. Let us likewise extend grace and freedom.

Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, thank You for Your guiding wisdom. Please open my eyes to opportunities where I can release Your grace to others. May they know freedom through You.

6 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet" Psalm 119:105

Yesterday, we talked about 'quickness' in extending grace to others. This 'quickness' is not "Okay, okay" quickness. Yes, it might be a 'quick' response, but it can very easily be interpreted as impatience, even if none is intended.

A quickness to extend grace should itself be grace-soaked. For instance, you could reassure swiftly with "I can see that you are committed/doing your best." Help the other to feel recognised, to feel validated in their efforts. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet"* (Ps 119:105). Ask Holy Spirit to prompt you with an appropriate verse to share. This may be one which suits the mood or the moment, but Holy Spirit knows (Rom 8:26-27). If appropriate, it might also be a good time to pray a prayer of encouragement.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, please share God's holy words with me, that my companion may know Your grace in their stumbles and fumbles.



7 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105

Perhaps today you feel called to walk forward with new purpose and determination. But, like Thomas, you may be asking "How can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

God's Word is not simply "a lamp to my feet," it is also "a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). God stands ready to guide us. But how?

God's Word reveals. Through implanting God's Word in our hearts, minds, and spirits, we come to understand a little more of God's heart. We become attuned to His ways, and develop a deeper relationship with His Holy Spirit. Then we will become more attuned to His still small voice and to His directions, knowing the way (Isa 30:21).

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for Your Word. Thank You too that I may approach You in prayer, laying my concerns and desires before You.

8 July

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105

We need God's Word to guide us in our path (Ps 119:105). Without His guidance (Isa 30:21), we would not know which way to go.

On our own, we can be prone to following the crowd, our desires, the latest trends, or racing down an attractive rabbit hole!

Meanwhile, God knows exactly what He has planned to achieve with our lives (Jer 29:11). God has *"prepared beforehand [good works] that we should walk in them"* (Eph 2:10).

The desires and gifts which God has placed inside of us can be clues. A big question to help us discern is whether following these will be for our glory or for God's. Let us reflect on that, and consider it some more tomorrow.

Pray: Thank You, Dearest Father God, for the gifts which You have given to me. Thank You too for the passions and desire which guide me in using those gifts. Please help me to recognise whether these gifts bring glory to You or to me?



9 July

"Your word is a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

Today, let us consider our gifts.

Do these draw us closer to being the people God calls us to be? Can we see that using those gifts is instrumental in us stepping more fully into the richness of fellowship with God?

If the answer was No, then prayerfully offering these gifts is a path to follow at this time. Possibly God is still developing those gifts within us. Maybe, while we believe that we are offering them for God's glory, we may still be enamoured with the glory we receive by association. Maybe we need to confess some pridefulness in our gifting?

Pray: Dearest Father God, I seek to honour and glorify You in all of my ways. Please forgive me for prideful thoughts.

10 July

"Your word is a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

Can we answer Yes to how God is moving us in using our gifts, and Yes to offering them up for God's glory?

If Yes, then let us prayerfully ask God to guide us in further refining the blessing of these gifts. Maybe God wants us to use them in new spheres or in new ways? Could God be calling you to train others with similar gifts? If so, let us humbly and gently guide, giving all glory to God.

That does not mean that we pass over, ignore, or dismiss the work involved in developing a gift. But let us acknowledge that it has come from God and is to be used in ways which glorify God and expand His Kingdom.

Pray: Dearest Lord, I know that every good and perfect gift comes from You. Please help me to use this gift well, and to train others patiently.



Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

~James 5:16 NIV



11 July

"Your word is a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

Today, let us consider our desires.

Do these draw us closer to being the people God calls us to be? Is following these desires consistent with claiming Jesus as our Lord and Saviour?

If the answer was No, then prayerfully ask God to help you resist these desires. Possibly God is still refining us in our desires, so that they match and more appropriately reflect our calling as beloved children of God. Let us acknowledge that temptations can draw us astray, and ask for God's grace and mercy.

Pray: Dearest Triune God, please forgive me for the ways that my desires have led me astray. Please work through me for Your glory.

12 July

"Now when it was evening ..." Matt 14:15a

Sometimes the time of day is integral to the story of what took place. In 'the dead of night' issues can seem a lot more intimidating than in 'the bright light of day.'

When darkness looms, things can stretch bigger with shadows. Yet, seen from their proper perspective, they are a lot more manageable.

But, even in the middle of what seems overwhelming, we can turn to the Lord. Jesus Himself declared, *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12).

Step toward the Light of the world. Bring Him what is overwhelming you, or ask Him to clearly show you this thing which is frightening.

With clearer vision, what previously seemed dark, foreboding, and expanded with shadows, suddenly becomes clearer. Further, in inviting Jesus to be with you, you have a renewed sense of security in Him.

Re-experience the peace which Jesus promises (John 14:27).

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for shining Your light and love into my situation. Please lift this fear from me, for Your glory.



13 July

"Now when it was evening ..." Matt 14:15a

Have our days become so programmed and crammed with activities that we are not physically, mentally, or emotionally ready for what God might do unexpectedly?

James reminds us that we ought to say, *"If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that"* (Jas 4:15). As far as it depends on us, let us be available as instruments for God's will. This may mean a reorganisation of your schedule when you believe He is calling you to other plans, places, or purposes. This is not about failing in your responsibilities. As children of God we are called to be good stewards. However, God's call to take public transport instead of driving, still gets you to your location, but God may place you to speak a word of truth to a fellow traveller as He directs.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, please guide my words and actions.

14 July

"Now when it was evening ..." Matt 14:15a

Yesterday we talked about being available to guide as God wills.

Does that mean that we can never make any plans?

Not at all; we are simply to hold our plans loosely, committed to serve where God has placed us, but available to respond as He prompts.

As we commit our plans to God's oversight (Jas 4:13-16), we become more discerning of His voice (John 10:27). As we spend time in God's Word, we know His voice more clearly, but also become more committed to His kingdom purposes. We want to be His instruments.

If this is your yearning too, then offer your service to God's glory, and ask Him to guide your steps (Ps 119:105). As more commit to becoming faithful followers and guide, more will become faithful followers and guides.

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for walking this earth and for giving us an incredible example of faithful service.



15 July

"... the disciples came to him and said ..." Matt 14:15b

When He walked this earth, Jesus's disciples had ready access to approach Him and speak to Him (Matt 14:15b).

We have been given that same access. Jesus Himself said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). In many cases, we have freer access to Jesus than His disciples did, as they were sometimes restrained by the crowds or fearful of speaking, although lacking in understanding (Mark 9:32).

If you do not usually come before the Lord in prayer each day, then decide today to take up that habit. In fact, you are not limited to praying only once each day, but beginning with once is the start of a spiritually enriching habit.

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You that I can come before You in prayer.

16 July

"... the disciples came to him and said ..." Matt 14:15b

Tonight you may come before the Lord and say, "Today I went to [name] and said, '....'"

Is this a confession? Would you like to be able to take back what you have said? Between now and when you come before the Lord in confession is the time to avoid saying what you may regret later.

Yes, it can sometimes feel good to be bluntly honest, but it would usually only be a short-lived feeling. Blunt honesty can often be hurtful.

The problem is not the 'honest' part, but the addition of the 'bluntly.' If such an opportunity or necessity comes up today, choose gentleness and grace instead. It will be less painful for both of you.

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for Your living example of grace and generous love. Please help me to do likewise.



The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

~James 5:16 NIV



17 July

"... the disciples came to him and said ..." Matt 14:15b

Have you ever wanted to rewind something which you had said?

The words have already been shared now, but you can still ask the forgiveness of the person with whom they were shared.

If you have regrets about how they conversation went, then share that. That may be all that is required to help the other person feel appeased.

It may be that you do not regret what was said, but the way in which it was said. Or you know that you shared the truth, but it may not have been necessary to explain in quite the way or extent shared.

Your clarification may bring comfort. Be humble, gentle, and kind.

Pray: Dear Lord, please help me to speak with gentleness and respect.

18 July

"... the disciples came to him and said ..." Matt 14:15b

Perhaps, rather than painful over-speaking, you were the recipient. It can be challenging to accept the words of another, especially when the words hurt or when the sharer speaks them hurtfully.

If possible, follow the words of James 1:19-20 before retorting. *"... let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."*

Rather than retort, follow the example of the disciples and go to Jesus (Matt 14:15b), telling Him what was said and how it was hurtful. The Lord will already know how this have been painful to your mind, heart, and spirit, but the expression may assist you in processing your pain.

Laying your hurt before the Lord will also release salve for your spirit.

Pray: *Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for Your soothing touch to my mind, heart, and spirit. Thank You for lifting my pain through Your grace.*



19 July

"This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Matt 14:15c

Do we sometimes use our words to speak of a solution rather than being part of the solution?

James writes about the one who says, *"Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body"* (Jas 2:16). The James who asks, *"What good is that?"* (2:16) also declares *"faith apart from works is dead"* (2:26).

Yes, it was great to see the concern that the disciples showed for the crowds. Yes, it was great that the speaker wanted the hungry, poorly-clothed one to be blessed. But is there a way that we can help?

Rather than simply recognising the need, and suggest the solution, let us be prepared to be instruments in the solution.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, please continue to soften my heart toward those who are hurting. Please open my understanding on ways to help.*

20 July

"But Jesus said, "They need not go away." Matt 14:15d

When was the last time that God asked you to intervene in the life of another?

Was it just yesterday, or maybe last week? Were you receptive to His call?

It can certainly be challenging when God calls us to a task at an inconvenient time. You may have planned to be engaging in one activity, but the door suddenly closes, or another door opens, and you know in your heart that this is the door which you should walk through.

Are you prepared to be obedient? Are you prepared to be inconvenienced? Come before the Lord, like Isaiah, and say *"Here I am! Send me"* (Isa 6:8).

Pray: Dearest Triune God, thank You for Your call. Please strengthen me to give priority to Your will. Your will is my command.



21 July

"But Jesus said, "They need not go away." Matt 14:15d

Yesterday we talked about making a commitment to one task but then being directed to another.

We may have honestly believed that the first was God's priority. However, while this may be for God's glory, and may be a good thing to do, this is not God's best for us. He may have tasked another for this. Ours is to be obedient in walking according to His best will for us.

It can even happen that the opportunities were rich in the first engagement, but quite sparse in the second, where you attended. The lack of quantity in the second may be far outstripped by the depth of quality. Further, had the positions been reversed, you may not have reached the quantity in the first, and the other may not have produced the quality God was able to produce through you. Let us trust in the wisdom of our good and faithful God.

Pray: Dear Father God, please strengthen me to withstand the temptation to be either prideful or envious.

22 July

"But Jesus said, "They need not go away." Matt 14:15d

When Jesus said, *"They need not go away"* (Matt 14:15d), He was responding to a request from His disciples. They had wanted to send the crowds away.

Do we sometimes have a low tolerance for ministry tasks which drag on, or which are unpleasant, confronting, or demeaning?

When we fall into this kind of thinking, it might be good to remember what the King of Kings went through in order to win our freedom! I think we can all agree that He suffered what was unpleasant, confronting, and demeaning. If we find ourselves in this headspace, let us pray in this way.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, please reignite my passion to serve.*



[Hannah] was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord
and wept bitterly.

Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved,
and her voice was not heard.

1 Samuel 1:10, 13



23 July

"But Jesus said, "They need not go away." Matt 14:15d

When Jesus said, *"They need not go away"* (Matt 14:15d), Jesus was expressing His desire to have them stay. Jesus knew what He planned to achieve, and He knew the impact that would have on His disciples, and on the crowds.

Are we listening for Holy Spirit prompts? Like Samuel, we may not have understanding to discern God's still small voice. If we experience a prompting in our spirit, let us say with Samuel, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"* (1 Sam 3:9 NIV). Although His plans may seem daunting, do not fear. God will enable you to serve as He wills.

Pray: *Thank You for calling me, Lord. I choose to follow You.*

24 July

"But Jesus said, "... you give them something to eat." Matt 14:16

When Jesus said, *"you give them something to eat"* (Matt 14:15e), it is likely that His disciples were confused.

It is possible that their plan to send the crowds away included a plan to *"go into the villages and buy food for themselves"* (Matt 14:15c). However, not sending the crowds away also meant that they could not go away to buy food (John 4:8).

Has God ever reversed the perfect plans that you had created for meeting your own needs? Yes, it can happen. What is your response?

Do you become so frustrated, or enraged, or disappointed in the door that has closed that you fail to see what God is doing instead? God can even turn our times of bitter disappointment into times of blessing (Jas 1:17).

Pray: Thank You, Dearest Lord. I can now rejoice that You reversed my plans and made them so much better.



25 July

"But Jesus said, "... you give them something to eat." Matt 14:16

Returning to when Jesus said, *"you give them something to eat"* (Matt 14:15e), He likely already knew how He would meet the hunger of the crowds. Like James (Jas 2:26), Jesus wanted active participation, not empty words.

How did the disciples respond? They spoke of the limitations of what they had. *"They said to him, 'We have only five loaves here and two fish.'"* (Matthew 14:17).

Do we sometimes miss the blessings which God is bringing into our lives because one thing is missing? Let us offer what we have to give, and trust that Jesus will multiply it in exactly the right way. This may be a multiplication in favour of others, like the crowds fed (Matt 14:20-21), or in the harvest God produces from our efforts (Mark 4:20).

Pray: Dearest Lord, please open my eyes to see where You are at work.

26 July

"But Jesus said, "... you give them something to eat." Matt 14:16

Yesterday we touched on the multitude of blessings from God's hands which are missed because we are focused on a missing aspect.

Are we living under the belief that our life "will be perfect" once we have a marriage partner?

Being single when many of your friends are married can be challenging.

However, each season has its own challenges. For those married, the plans and temperaments of two people need to be taken into consideration. The challenges and blessings are further complicated when children are present. Whether coupled or single, we can be tempted to look with envy on the life of the other. The grass we are not mowing seems greener.

Pray: O Dearest Lord, please help us to appreciate the blessings that You pour into each situation, knowing gratitude.



27 July

"But Jesus said, "... you give them something to eat." Matt 14:16

Maybe instead of a partner, our "life will be perfect" when we have a baby, a better job, a better relationship, or another 'perfect.'

Instead, God is inviting us to appreciate life as we have it now. He wants to transform us through the blessings He has placed in our lives, and transform us through our reliance on Him to provide for unmet desires in other ways or at another time.

When God said, "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matt 7:7), He did not mean that every whim, wish, and fantasy would be immediately granted. If so, we would become demanding monsters! Instead, our needs are met, some desires are granted swiftly, and some desires are met when we are ready and receptive to receive them.

When Jesus said, "you give them something to eat" (Matt 14:15e), it was a call to help, support, and encourage others (John 13:34; 1 Thes 4:18).

Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please open my eyes to see what I can help, support, and offer encouragement to others, for Your glory.

28 Jul

"They said to him, 'We have only five loaves here and two fish.'"

Matthew 14:17 ESV

Do we sometimes look at what we have to offer, and decide that it is insufficient to meet the needs?

What does that tell us?

We are simply looking at what we have to bring ourselves, but not considering what the Lord can do with what we offer to Him. Although Jesus may no longer be physically present to accept our offerings, He can still do miraculous things with them.

Offer whatever is yours to give, with humility and generosity.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You for Your example of generous giving, when You gave Your Only Son to be our Saviour Jesus.*



For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer.

~1 Pet 3:12



29 July

"They said to him, 'We have only five loaves here and two fish.'"

Matt 14:17

Yesterday we touched on how God can take our small offering and use it in miraculous ways. How can that be?

Imagine for a second that you sent a message or postcard or text to someone living a long distance from you. You do not see the impact. However, your message might have led him or her to feel encouraged, sharing a contagious smile. That smile is carried further by all that they meet, and can be the inspiration for other acts of selflessness or generosity. God can truly do amazing things with even simple acts of obedience. Offer your faithfulness today.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for how You bountifully stretch what I offer to You in a multiplicity of miraculous ways.*

30 July

“They said to him, ‘We have only five loaves here and two fish.’”

Matt 14:17

These five loaves and two fish may have been from the lunchpack of a child. The word used to describe these ‘loaves’ is not a word for what ‘loaves’ would mean to us. Size-wise, they were closer to the mini bread rolls available on the table at functions. Small though they were, they were still given with generosity.

May we too generously offer what is ours to give, or what is offered to us for giving. Though small and meagre, it comes from a heart of generosity.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for inviting me to offer what I have to give. Thank You for accepting my small offering with grace.



31 July

“They said to him, ‘We have only five loaves here and two fish.’”

Matt 14:17

We humbly offer what we have for God’s glory and purposes. We do not know how He will use it.

Imagine that you are one of the servants charged with taking the drawn-out water from water jars to the master of the feast at the wedding at Cana (John 2:7-8). You know that this is water. You know that wine is what is expected. You may be anticipating a moment of intense humiliation.

Instead, the master, after tasting, responded, “you have kept the good wine until now” (v10e). The drawn-out water had been transformed into wine by Jesus.

In a similar way, although we know our faults, failings, and weaknesses, God sees us with His eyes of grace. He knows His plans for us. He knows the ways that He has gifted us. He calls us forth to offer what we have for His glory.

Pray: Thank You, Triune God, for the incredible plans that You have made for me. Thank You for the gifts You have given to me. Please help me to grow in confidence as I use them, but remain humble before You.

1 August

“And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’” Matt 14:18

Have you ever been in a situation where a parent, a teacher, an employer, or someone else with authority over you asks you, *“Bring them here to me”* (Matt 14:18)?

In some instances, you may wonder whether what you have got to bring will be good enough, particularly where the person in authority is a teacher or employer. The request may relate to a work or school project, and you are nervously wondering if you have fully grasped the concept or scope, and have met the requirements.

When the One in authority is the Lord of the universe, how much more do we want to offer our best and finest. In this case, the disciples were asked to bring Jesus the loaves and fish. When we are asked to place before Him what He has asked of us, we do not need to be afraid. Even when we fail, even when we have misunderstood the concept or the scope, we will experience the Lord’s grace. *“The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works”* (Ps 145:17).

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for Your grace. I seek to please You.



2 August

“And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’” Matt 14:18

Rather than a project or an item, oftentimes what we are asked to bring are our pains, concerns, worries, and prayers (1 Pet 5:7).

We do not have to hide, bury, push aside, push down, dismiss, or ignore what is causing us concern or sleepless nights. God asks that we bring these things to Him.

God seeks to lift these concerns from our hearts, minds, and shoulders. We are not meant to carry those things which weigh us down. Instead, the Lord wants us to *“Take my yoke upon you ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* Matt 11:29-30).

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for being willing to take my burdens. I accept Your yoke, and want to walk in faithfulness to You.

3 August

“And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’” Matt 14:18

Not just our worries, but the cares and concerns of others can also be taken to the Lord.

It is a most incredible privilege to kneel before the Lord’s throne with a beloved brother or sister in Christ. We come together, trusting in our Heavenly Father for the needs on our hearts.

We can be confident that God will listen and hear our prayers. Holy Spirit too will guide us on how to pray, especially when we cannot find the words to express our angst (Rom 8:26-27).

Are you carrying a burden for another today? Bring it before the Lord in prayer, and know that peace which passes understanding (John 14:27).

Pray: Thank You, Dearest Lord, that I can lay my burdens before You.

Please lay Your hand of healing, grace, and power on my friend.



“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.

~ Colossians 1:9 NIV



4 August

“And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’” Matt 14:18

Of course, God does not want us to merely bring the cares and concerns of our friends to lay upon His throne. God also seeks to have a salvatory relationship with them.

Just as Jesus told His disciples, *‘Bring them here to me’*” (Matt 14:18) about the bread and fish, He invites you to bring your friends to where they can hear about Jesus as Lord, and have opportunity to accept His invitation. The Lord is already at work in their lives, perhaps through prompts, or words, or dreams. Now may be your opportunity to connect them with a local Christian or a community of Christians.

Pray: O Lord Jesus, thank You for the opportunity to bring others to You, that they may know You as their Lord and Saviour. Please guide my words.

5 August

"Then ... taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing." Matt 14:19

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (Jas 1:17).

If today we only had what we thanked God for yesterday, would you be naked, hungry, or homeless?

It can be so easy to simply accept bountiful gifts from God's hands while forgetting to be thankful! Jesus, receiving the loaves and fish which He intended to pass on to others *"said a blessing"* (Matt 14:19). How much more grateful should we be for the abundance of blessings which we can call our own!

Today, let us specifically thank God for all that we have and receive.

Pray: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for every good thing I have in my life. I appreciate my family, my home, the opportunities before me, the clothes and food which You have provided, and the other things I mention now.



6 August

"... he looked up to heaven and said a blessing." Matt 14:19

The loaves and fish for which Jesus said a blessing (Matt 14:19) were not kept by Him.

We too are to be thankful for whatever God brings into our lives. They may be ours to keep, they may be ours to cherish for a season, like children, or they may simply be in our lives for a blessed moment.

Whichever is the case, let us be thankful for our blessings, praise God for them, and hold them with open hands. We are not to cling to things or people, but only to cling to the Lord (Josh 23:8), from whom all good things come.

"Don't store up treasures here on earth" (Matt 6:19 NLT). God is our true treasure (v20). Treasure Him, and appreciate Him with thankfulness.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the work You do in our lives.

7 August

“Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.” Matt 14:19

Jesus gave the broken loaves to the disciples, who then gave them to the crowds (Matt 14:19). Jesus did not take on the whole distribution Himself. Instead, He accepted the help and support of others in meeting the needs of the crowds.

Now God is calling others in these generations to receive from Him and to pass on to others. God wants the crowds to be fed. Are you one whom God is calling to assist with passing out nourishment to others?

Firstly, God may be calling you to serve His church, His community, those He is calling in your workplace, or those He is calling in your neighbourhood. Are you ready to answer His call? Like Isaiah, we can respond to God’s call and say *“Here I am! Send me”* (Isa 6:8).

Pray: *Dearest Lord, I commit to following You wholeheartedly.*



8 August

“Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied.” Matt 14:19

Through the bountiful multiplication of the Lord, the five loaves and two fish were used to feed *“about five thousand men, besides women and children”* (Matt 14:21).

Whatever we also offer to the Lord will be used to satisfy according to His purposes. Are you seeking God’s direction for your life? Do not hold back. Instead, be ready to serve wherever you are needed. That might be on a big platform or stage. Alternatively, it may be on a low-profile frontline, even in a morgue among the dead. Yet, through you, God may wish to speak peace to those who are suffering most intense losses.

Lay down your wishes and trust God’s plans. He knows how He has been preparing you, and where best you are to serve.

Pray: *Thank You, Father God, for walking with me in all that I am and have.*

9 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

Sometimes, like when our desires and God’s plans appear to be out of alignment, it is good to come before the Lord in prayer. During His earthly life, Jesus regularly went *“by himself to pray”* (Matt 14:23).

If Jesus, who so intimately knew and was engaging with the Father, needed to dedicate time to prayer, how much more should we spend time in prayer.

Prayer is not a duty to be fulfilled as instructed. No! Prayer is dedicated time for an intimate conversation with your Heavenly Father. Come.

Pray: Dearest Heavenly Father, thank You that You are always available to listen, to comfort, to strengthen, to be near, and to lead in growth.



We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives ...”

~ Colossians 1:9 NIV



10 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

How are all things in your world right now?

To outsiders, it may seem as though you live the perfect life. Yet, insider knowledge may say otherwise. Your Heavenly Father knows, and He is enabling you.

On the other hand, some may be looking at your life with twisting hands and brows, concerned. Again, how things appear on the outside may not be true reflections of the inside. Your Father God may be taking you through a really tough season. But, in the middle of it, you have known the most intense times of intimacy and growth in your faith. Thank Him.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for how You are at work in my life.

11 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

Yesterday we caught two brief outside views of your life. Neither may have been correct. How is the inside view, looking outward?

Do we sometimes become jealous of how God has blessed others?

It can be so easy to fall into “My life will be perfect when ...” thinking. Reminder, life in this world will be challenging. Yes, some people appear to have a heavier portion of pleasure. Others appear to have a heavier portion of pain. But appearances can be deceptive.

Rather than being jealous, let us praise God for the blessings the other is receiving. Where the other appears to be suffering, let us pray for them, and praise God for His enabling.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the opportunity to pray or praise with others. Please help me to show kindness to all that I meet, as we are each facing challenges, whether large or small.



12 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

Maybe others are jealous of the life which they perceive that you are living.

Whether or not this is your true reality, thank God for the blessings you have received, and pray that the other may know God’s provision, His faithfulness, His strengthening, and His growth through the storms of life.

No life is perfect, each of us faces the temptations of sin (Rom 3:23), and each of us is fully dependent on the Lord for everything in our lives, even our breath. Pray that God would smooth the journey of others.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for all that You are achieving in my life. There have been difficult times. There have been growing times. There have been joyful times, and there are times of blessing. Thank You.

13 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

We have been considering perceptions. There is one other perception of which we need to be aware. This is a sense of entitlement.

Oh so easily we can be tempted to believe that we are ‘entitled’ to the things which are part of another person’s reality. After all, we work hard, give generously, and live lives of purity ... somehow missing the fact that we are a living, breathing part of fallen humanity!

Paul confirms that *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). No matter how much we may deny it, or how little we display or profess it, we are among the ‘all’ who are sinners (1 John 1:10).

Confess, and ask God’s forgiveness, also expressing gratitude for what God, in His generosity, has chosen to give us.

Pray: Dearest Father God, please forgive me for being so incredibly presumptuous. Thank You for all the good people and things You bring into my life. I am appreciative.



14 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

In our ‘entitlement’ claim yesterday, we mentioned ‘working hard.’

Working hard is something we chose to do. It should overflow from a gratitude of heart for all that God has already done through Jesus, and what God continues to do in power and blessings every single day.

If we mention ‘working hard’ in the same breath as entitlement, are we now resorting to works-based salvation? Because if we are appealing to our ‘works’ as a claim for God’s blessings, should He weigh our salvation based on our works too?

Before choosing to follow that path, it would be good to remember that our ‘works’ amount to a pile of *“filthy rags”* (Isa 64:6 NIV). Let us recognise our folly, and plead for forgiveness.

Pray: Dear God, please forgive my foolishness. I am satisfied in You.

15 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

‘Entitlement’-thinking can also seep in for those already basking in God’s rich blessings. The ‘hard work pays off’ reasoning of the world begins to impact your thinking. However, Kingdom understanding is often upside-down from worldly thinking (Matt 20:16; 1 Cor 1:26).

God has His own reasons for the allocation of blessings. We cannot know or comprehend the mind of God (1 Cor 2:16). Yet, while we are special recipients of His grace, may our attitude remain in gratitude. Further, look for ways to bless others from the blessings which you have received.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for Your generous provisions to me. Please give me wisdom and discernment so that I may use these blessings to help, assist, and encourage others for Your kingdom and glory.



“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers”

~Phm 4 NIV



16 August

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.” Matt 14:23

No matter how little, whether in finances, time, energy, or capacity, offer it for God’s glory.

Remember the ten lepers who were cured, and only one returned (Luke 17:17)? When you choose to give, do not get hung up on numbers, limiting yourself to one in ten. Jesus asked, *“Where are the nine?”* In time, finances, energy, or capacity, this does not mean giving away 100 per cent. Rather, it is about giving away what you have agreed with the Lord and, with the balance, to use it in ways which are consistent with God’s kingdom and glory. Are you tempted to use it for sinful pleasures? Stop! Honour God with each per cent.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for the abundance of Your blessings.

17 August

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matt 5:3

Whether the "poor" (Luke 6:20) or the "*poor in spirit*" (Matt 5:3), they recognise that their riches are in the heavenly kingdom. Jesus Himself tells us to "*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*" (Matt 6:20). These are true riches. These are the riches which live within the hearts of the poor or the poor in spirit. Maybe you do not believe me?

Those who are poor are well acquainted with the agony, striving, pain, grief, and loss associated with poverty. So when they receive any blessing or recognise another who is in an even worse state than themselves, the generosity in their heart bubbles up, and they share even from the meagre they possess. That is because their hearts are their true treasure when their hearts are aligned with the heart of God.

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for Your heart-connection with those who are poor in spirit. Please provide what they need, and please bless them as they generously share with others.



18 August

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt 5:4

Like the poor tending most generously to others facing poverty, those who mourn are oftentimes most deeply comforted by those who are well-acquainted with grief.

Paul reminded those in the church at Corinth that the Father "*comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*" (2 Cor 1:4).

Who better to send than those already familiar with the road of grief. Notice, they are not sharing only from their grief, but sharing the comfort received from the Father.

Pray: Dear Father God, thank You for Your most perfect caring plan.

19 August

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt 5:4

When Paul writes that the Father *“comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort”* (2 Cor 1:4), does Paul mean that God has delegated comfort? I do not believe so. I believe that God calls those He has previously comforted to supplement His comfort. Those who have previously journeyed with God are now His hands and feet in care, support, encouragement, and attention.

For those who have not gone through grief yet, mourning and recovery can seem like an incredibly long process. Their instinct can be to be concerned that the mourner will become stuck in grief. For this reason, they often rush them toward happier thoughts. This may not work, and can even be unhealthy in delaying an appropriate processing of grief. When instead a mourner is ‘given permission’ to take as long as they need, the grieving time may somewhat shrink. They feel heard. Their feelings about the loss, and the loss itself, are truly validated. The mourners are able to lay down their grief and begin to process the happier times shared with their beloved.

Pray: *O Dearest Lord, thank You for the wonderful comfort You give.*



20 August

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt 5:4

In saying yesterday that God supplements His comfort, this is not to suggest that God’s comfort is inadequate. God is a wonderful comforter. In fact God’s comfort through other people points to His ongoing comfort of those whom He originally comforted. As they co-comfort with God, their healing is being more fully perfected. In time, those they are currently comforting will be invited to be the comforters of others, while God will stretch them into new levels of healing grace.

As Jesus Himself said, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”* (Matt 5:4).

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for the comfort which I have been experiencing. Thank You for those You placed in my life, and their stories.*

21 August

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt 5:4

Some of the difficulty with mourning is determining the level of transparency which is acceptable.

In some cases, we make every effort to hide our grief. In others, where we feel safer, we allow ourselves to be more transparent. With God, we can be truly ourselves.

God knows the true cost of our pain. He knows the loss, any associated sense of regret mixed with the grief, even the anger toward God, which He would like us to freely give to Him (1 Pet 5:7). With God we can be most truly ourselves. Among those we love, and to whom we are beloved, we can also freely share.

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You that I do not have to hide my pain from You.*



Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! ~ Ps 4:1



22 August

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt 5:4

Earlier we had recognised that those who have travelled the grief journey have deeper hearts for comforting those who mourn.

How truly does the author of Hebrews tell us that *“we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses”* (Heb 4:15a). The detailing of the crucifixion shows us His physical, mental, and spiritual torture (Luke 22:44). Lazarus’s death reveals His emotional pain (John 11:35). Jesus truly is One well positioned to understand our anxiety, fear, pain, anger, and grief. Jesus did not angrily retort, but was instead silent as a Lamb (Acts 8:32; Isa 53:7).

To be clear, Jesus is not asking us to be silent about our pain. This was His call (Isa 53:7). Instead, the Lord seeks to hold us in our pain, comforting us.

Pray: *Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for understanding the depths of my pain, and for Your sweet comfort.*

23 August

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matt 5:7

This beatitude which Jesus shared is affirmed by His later parable on the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:23-35). His master had extended mercy to him, forgiving a debt of ten thousand talents when the servant fell on his knees before him (v23-27). A talent is worth about twenty years’ wages for a labourer. Despite that, this servant had received mercy.

However, as he left, he met a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. A denarius was a day’s wage for a labourer. The second servant falls on his knees and begged for mercy, but the first servant, whose debt had been cancelled, refused to grant mercy, and put his fellow servant in prison (v28-30). The master was told that the servant to whom he had granted mercy refused another mercy. Then the master’s mercy was revoked and the unforgiving servant was sent to jail (31-34).

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for Your incredible mercy to me. By Your grace, I have received forgiveness for my sins. Thank You for Your example of forgiveness.



24 August

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matt 5:7

So what lessons can we draw from the parable we explored yesterday? The master showed incredible mercy in cancelling the large debt of his servant. However, this forgiveness was not followed by his servant. Although he had begged for and received mercy for a huge debt, his gratitude did not overflow into mercy for his fellow servant who owed a considerably smaller amount.

Although the first servant had received mercy, he did not extend mercy. As such, he was not merciful, and so the mercy which he had received was withdrawn (Matt 5:7).

As we pray Our Father, let us remember *“forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”* (Matt 6:12), and be ready to extend grace.

Pray: Dear Father God, thank You for Your mercy and grace.

25 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

Winter is still here. Yes, the temperatures are beginning to rise. We can already perceive that Spring will soon be here. However, it is still officially winter.

Today winter may still be in your heart. Others around you appear to be stepping into the colours of Spring. Yet, in your heart, you do not yet feel ready.

It may be that you are still walking in the middle of grief. As surely as Spring is coming, your springtime will come too. There will be a softening, a melting, and then the scents of Spring.

How do I know? Because the Lord is your shepherd and you shall not want (Ps 23:1). Although for a time there will be sadness, as can be expected, the God you love is holding you. Very soon laughter will again ring out. Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for Your tender closeness. Thank You for holding me when my heart is too heavy to carry alone.*



26 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

As we shake off the cooler weather of winter, maybe you are trying to shake off the anger you have been suppressing.

Yes, you are familiar with Psalm 23 and yes, you have sung many of the songs which tell of God's provision. Yet, in your heart, there is a cold realisation that a prayer you prayed was not answered. The partner you prayed to keep made other choices instead.

Beloved, you are not carrying this pain alone! Your loving Heavenly Father also wanted your partner to remain faithful to the relationship. God hurts with us when we are hurting (John 11:35).

Please allow Him to hold you in His loving arms, soothing you, sheltering you, and being your protective Shepherd (Ps 23:1).

Pray: *Father God, thank You for recognising my hurt and pain.*

27 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

Yesterday we mentioned that you have been holding hurt because of unfaithfulness. Perhaps, in your own way, you have linked the unfaithfulness of your partner with God. The anger you held toward your partner has been extended to God.

Right now, God is asking you to release your anger to Him. He knows that you are hurting. He knows what it is to have others exercise their right to choice in ways which hurt Him. Right now, His concern is with you and the choices that you are making.

You can choose to keep trusting in God's promises. God is faithful.

Pray: *Dear God, I do not quite know what to pray right now. I know that You love me. Please help me.*



... for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance ...

~Phil 1:19



28 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

God is our Shepherd. He knows what we need. As a shepherd, He knows that we will hurt ourselves if we continue to stay twisted in the grip of anger and pain. As a Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Lord provides for our needs, shelters us, and guides us. For us, in this season, that means that the Good Shepherd wants to cut us free from the anger which entangles us. Allow Him.

How can we do that? We can place it at His feet, upon His throne. While we continue to carry and caress it, it colours our worldview. Release it to the loving hands of the Lord. He seeks to bring you rest (Ps 23:2-3).

Pray: *Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for flooding me with Your love. Thank You for releasing me from the grip and pain of anger. I am Yours.*

29 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

At different times, in different seasons, we may believe that we do not have what we want!

The 'want' that David speaks of is not the 'want' of a greedy heart. No, David instead speaks of 'being in want.' But our Good Shepherd (John 10:11) does not leave us in this state of want. He provides for our needs, so that *"I lack nothing"* (Ps 23:1 NIV).

He provides for our needs, those things which are essential.

With your unmet prayer, did God leave a 'need' unmet? It may be that you still experience an unmet need. It could be that you are not ready for how God will meet this need. There may be some 'unwrapping' to be done, in your heart, or another's, before God's will can come to pass. For instance, your future employer may need to recognise their need for someone with your particular skills, before they are ready to hire you.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You for knowing me so intimately that You have prepared the perfect path for me.*



30 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

When God is our Shepherd is life perfect?

No, this world is not our perfect world. We will continue to face difficulties in this world.

Firstly, there is the fact that this world is not our home. One day soon, we will be in our everlasting home, worshipping God with holy abandon.

Secondly, not all those living in this fallen world look to God as their Lord or their Saviour. They do not honour God with their choices, and so live at odds with God's plans for them and us.

Thirdly, in this world, we are being perfected for the life to come. This is our training ground. Accept how God is crafting you, being obedient.

Pray: *Dear Father, thank You for the privilege of being Your beloved child.*

31 August

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23:1

Trust that God will continue to work His love, grace, and mercy in your life. He is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11), and looks out for you with care and goodness.

Could God also be calling you to be His instrument of support or shepherding in your spheres of influence?

The beautiful psalms of David were crafted from his own experiences of shepherding. Take time today to appreciate God's creativity in nature, spending time outdoors, and draw nearer through His Word (Jas 4:8).

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You for Your faithful provision.*



The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

~1 Pet 4:7



1 September

"He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams."

Ps 23:2 NLT

As the buds of spring appear, their green can remind us of the unceasing faithfulness of our God.

But God is not just with us in Spring. He is not just here during the warmer weather, spending His winters in the tropics. He is not just here in the Summer, soaking up the sun's rays with us. No, our God is always with us.

Take comfort, my soul, in God's sweet faithfulness. His presence and faithfulness are far more refreshing than all that nature can offer.

Pray: *Oh Lord, I am so grateful for Your constant presence. You are my Saviour and my God.*

2 September

“He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.”

Ps 23:2 NLT

Our God’s presence is such a comfort.

Job had companions with him. While they likely brought amazing comfort through their silent companionship in the early days, that changed. They spoke. But, rather than speak comfort, they spoke words of judgment.

Surely God would not treat Job in this way without cause (Job 4:7)!

Do we sometimes look at the lives of others, making our own judgments? Is that what we should do?

When we see tough circumstances, it can be so tempting to think that the recipient deserved it. Yet have we not gone through challenging times? Were these caused by sin in our lives? Some, perhaps.

We do not know why God chooses to do what He does when He does. Let us remember that He is God and we are not.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for taking care of all things according to Your perfect plans.



3 September

“He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.”

Ps 23:2 NLT

When we are in strife or facing challenges, we can trust in God. He is not just with us, He is our Comforter.

God knows what we need in every situation. When it is time for rest, *“He lets me rest in green meadows”* (Ps 23:2a NLT). God knows that I need to rest. He prompted me. He gives me many opportunities. He invites me to take rest. Sometimes God will lay His hand upon me, prompting me to take the necessary time.

Have you ever found yourself trying to fit in “one more thing” before taking a break? If a break is overdue, please put a plan in place today.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for Your caring prompt. I seek to be obedient.

4 September

"He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams."

Ps 23:2 NLT

When we do not follow God's call to rest, we are doing two things. We are being disobedient to His call for Sabbath rest. That should not be!

We are also displaying distrust in God's power and ability to take care of things. Is God no longer capable?

Of course God can take care of things. He was doing it long before He placed us on this earth. And He will likely be doing it long after we are gone, unless Jesus returns first.

God's instruction to us is for rest. So let us rest.

Pray: *I rest in You, Lord. Please forgive me for not taking rest before now.*



5 September

"He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams."

Ps 23:2 NLT

Our bodies need rest.

Just ask any student, or new parent. Our bodies work better with rest. Our minds are sharper after rest. Our sense of humour is restored after rest.

We function better on good rest.

Then, when I am refreshed and restored, He *"leads me beside peaceful streams"* (Ps 23:2b NLT).

While I am battling tiredness I may have no patience for peaceful streams. I am in alert, on-the-go mode.

My rested self, though, can appreciate peaceful streams. My inner balance is restored.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for the rest and restoration that I have experienced. Thank You for granting rest to me, in body, mind, and spirit.*

6 September

"He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams."

Ps 23:2 NLT

God is leading me. He knows that I am simply dust, and He knows that I need to rest. He also knows what I need to give my best.

Without His guidance, I may not choose "peaceful streams" (Ps 23:2b). I might be climbing mountains, or indoors, reading books, or playing games. Yet God may be seeking to lead me forward into a new season. Let us embrace His call, in work, rest, and play.

Pray: Dear Lord, You know the next part in Your plan for me. Thank You for caring and for organising for my good.



... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

~ Phil 4:6



7 September

"He restores my soul."

Ps 23:3a

God restores us.

You may be experimenting with different foods, additives, and allergies at present.

This may be your effort to know how to get fitter or healthier.

Alternatively, it may be that you are trying to solve a painful or allergic reaction. It is your body, but some aspects still need to be discovered.

In contrast, God knows your soul. God knows my soul. God knows exactly what we need for wholesomeness. Come, for restoration.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You for Your hand of restoration, renewal, and healing. Thank You for inviting me to come to You. I come.

8 September

“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Ps 23:3

Come to God, and accept the work that He is doing in your life.

God wants to restore our souls. He is calling us to Himself so that He may lead us in paths of righteousness (Ps 23:3).

We were created to be image-bearers of our Creator God (Gen 1:26-27). Now we *“are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”* (2 Cor 3:18).

As we follow His leading on paths of righteousness, we are being transformed. This transformation comes through the battles we face, the perseverance we offer, and the obedience of our sacrifices. We want to be God’s favoured sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2), that God may be glorified (Ps 23:3).

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for restoring my soul, my perfecting my ways, and for transforming me.



9 September

“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Psalm 23:3

Yesterday we talked about being made in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27).

Jesus is the One who so perfectly captured the fullness of God’s image in human form. *“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”* (Col 1:19). And now we are being transformed, so that we may bring glory to God (2 Cor 3:18).

Delight in all that God is doing. Yes, we may sometimes go through painful lessons as we shun our old lives and accept what is made new (Rom 7:5-6). Now we are following Holy Spirit’s promptings, on *“paths of righteousness”* (Ps 23:3). Come, walk in righteousness, honouring God.

Pray: Thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your nudges and prompts. I seek to obey.

10 September

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Ps 23:4

You are probably wonderfully familiar with Psalm 23. Yet is it not wonderful to look closely again, and to view afresh what God has invested there?

The second part declares *“I will fear no evil.”*

This is not a denial that there is evil. But it is a declaration that we will not fear it. And why? *“for You are with me.”*

We have full confidence that God is all that we need.

It is possible that David penned this one night on a mountaintop, possibly with merely a slim slither of moon to cast light. Yet, David knew that *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death”* he would not need to be afraid. We can also have that full confidence.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for Your comfort.*



11 September

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Ps 23:4

Yesterday, we recounted the fearlessness, and comfort we could have, knowing that God is with us. This is possible, even though we *“walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”*

Today, you may be experiencing a tough valley walk. It may feel as though you walk alone, but that is simply not true. The Lord is walking with you.

Although not visible to human eyes, God is with you, protecting you, and guiding you, with His rod and staff. Although you cannot see Him, have faith that He has not left you.

Pray: *Please help me, Lord, to sense Your closeness and protection.*

12 September

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Ps 23:5

If you ever had 'enemy' experiences in childhood, it is likely that you made yourself as invisible as possible. You probably wanted to go unnoticed.

Imagine David, who fought Goliath, yet who regularly needed to hide from King Saul, understanding that God would *"prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."*

David would be able to dine in peace in the presence of his enemies.

If you are currently facing some bitter challenges in your life, hold on to the thought that God understands. You do not need to be afraid. A day is coming when you will be able to relax in their presence.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You for Your protection.*



"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours."

~ John 17:9



13 September

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Ps 23:5

To anoint someone's head, is to affirm them in their calling, to pray protection and wisdom over them, and to honour them.

David had the assurance that he was anointed king (1 Sam 16:13). Yet David also had the humility and grace to continue respecting Saul as his king (1 Sam 24:5-7).

When we are given honour, let us not forget those who have gone before us, those on the margins, and those who have supported us. Service is not generally offered alone. Remember those who were faithful.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, if I am honoured, please guide me by Your wisdom.*

14 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Jesus honoured His Father’s house as a house of prayer. He sought to make it a safe and welcoming place for people to come and meet with their Heavenly Father.

Do we take the time daily to come and meet with our Heavenly Father in prayer?

If not yet, please plan a time in your daily schedule where that will be possible. It may be that currently you can only spare five minutes. Five minutes is still a start, and may be five minutes more than you spent in prayer yesterday.

Pray: Dearest Father God, I seek to have a committed time of prayer with You. Please help me to make that a regular part of my daily schedule. Please give me wisdom as I reorganise, so that I am focusing on and scheduling ‘needs’ before ‘wants.’



15 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Yesterday we considered making a commitment to at least five minutes in prayer, daily. However, if we can only squeeze in five minutes each day, let us plan to also include a time of longer prayer, at least once a week.

Is five minutes a day really enough for your most important relationship? Imagine if you only chatted for five minutes daily with the other important people in your life?

Let us reflect on what we would like to experience in this relationship.

Pray: Dear Father God, please forgive me for the time that I rushed prayer time with You. I seek to find a way for longer conversations, that I may come to know You more deeply.

16 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Yesterday we began to reflect on what we would like to experience in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

He is our Creator, the One who has developed a most perfect plan for us (Jer 29:11), and who knows us more deeply than we know ourselves (Ps 139:13-16). God is also the One who knows His call on our lives (Eph 2:10). Further, our Father God knows us in all our sinfulness, and He still chooses to love us (Rom 5:8).

Come, let us share our thankfulness.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for Your incredible, unstoppable, incomprehensible love for me. I lay my life before You, to be Your instrument of grace in my spheres. I am thankful that You are my Father.



17 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

We pray to the Father because Jesus has, incredibly, made a way for us to come to the Father, and to call God our Father (Matt 6:9).

Though we were worthless sinners (Rom 3:23), *“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).

Jesus Christ opened the way for us to be reconciled to the Father through His death on the cross. Because of Jesus, we can now come directly to the Father in prayer through Him.

In His prayer, Jesus invited us to *“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name’* (Matt 6:9).

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for making a way for me come before my Heavenly Father and Your Heavenly Father. Thank You for the sacrifice You made on my behalf. I am thankful for God the Son, Jesus.

18 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” Matt 21:13

Maybe you have come for your five-minute chat with the Father today, but you simply do not know where to begin.

Some issues can be too deep. Some concerns or hurts can be too painful for words. Yet God knows that too. Ask Holy Spirit to intervene for He *“helps us in our weakness ... the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”* (Rom 8:26).

Pray: *Dearest Father God, I am thankful for God the Spirit.*



And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

~ Matt 6:7-8



19 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

As we saw yesterday, sometimes an issue is too deep for us. We simply *“do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”* (Rom 8:26-27).

How amazing is that! We do not know how to express ourselves. We cannot put into words what we are experiencing or carrying, or how we have been hurt. Yet Holy Spirit can draw these directly from our hearts and turn them into intercessory words before the Father. Thank Him.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, I cannot express how grateful I am to have You as my translator.*

20 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Do you come to God’s house ready for a time of prayer and worship?
Could it be that you are there instead for social engagement?

Social engagement is important (Heb 10:25). However, that should not be your only, or even your main, reason for going to God’s house.

Imagine if people only visited you at home because you lived next door to Eric Bana. They would not be coming as your friends, but mainly for the potential sighting of Eric Bana. Put like that, going to church to meet your friends sounds rather selfish.

Instead, of making catch-ups our focus, let us keep God as the focus of our visits.

Pray: Dearest Lord God, please forgive me for the times that I did not make You my main reason for being at Your house.



21 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Do you come to God’s house ready to solely focus on God? That’s great, if you do. But is this the only time you dedicate time to focusing on God?

Our God has generously made Himself available to us. We can come at any time. That includes playing and singing along to some worship while you are cooking dinner. Feel free to dance too. God created your whole body with capacity to worship Him.

Remember too to thank God for your meals, and ask Him to bless them.

Pray: Thank You, God, for multiples of moments to praise and thank You. I am grateful.

22 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Yesterday we mentioned the thanksgiving blessing which you can pray over your meal. Of course, meals do not have to be the only activity which we dedicate to prayer. Before our day begins or ends, it can be wrapped in thankfulness and gratitude to God.

Are there other occasions for prayer and thankfulness? Anything to which we put our hands, mind, or heart can be offered to God. Get creative!

Give your work days to God. Lay a short prayer at His throne, particularly before and after every tricky phone call and every meeting which needs bucketloads of grace.

Give your exercise too to God for His blessing. Ask Him to cover your travels with grace, protection, and favour. Appreciate His presence.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for the blessings in every single day.*



23 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Do we only offer our blessings to God? Could we also offer our moments of angst, anger, nervousness, or need?

Of course! God accepts us just as we are, broken vessels with a glorious treasure (2 Cor 4:7).

We continue to battle as these jars of clay, yet we can acknowledge that *“the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal”* (2 Cor 4:18). God holds our future, and He is good.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for accepting me as I am, and continuing to walk with me. I honour You. I worship You.*

24 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Do you sometimes come reluctantly to God’s house?

Maybe you are no longer certain that you are part of the Body of Christ. Possibly you feel a disconnect, and wonder if you have anything to offer.

Remember we mentioned that God created your whole body with capacity to worship Him? Every part can make a contribution, and in doing so, we worship God, offering ourselves. Paul emphasised that each body part is important (1 Cor 12:12-26). You are important. What you have to offer is important. Including you is important. Come.

Pray: *Dear Lord, please open my understanding to new ways to connect.*



“And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

~ Luke 22:44



25 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” Matt 21:13

Yesterday we were talking about the contribution that each member of the Body of Christ is able to make.

If we do not yet feel connected, let us ask God to open doors of connection and engagement. He will bring beside us those who will offer godly encouragement if that is our prayer. Or we can ask God for opportunities and enabling to be connectors in engaging others.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, You know my sense of connection or disconnection with the Body of Christ, Your Church. Please help me to feel like I have a place here too. Thank You for those You are bringing beside me.*

26 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Do you sometimes avoid going to God’s house for a time of prayer?

Maybe you are concerned that your prayers will not seem ‘true,’ ‘relevant,’ ‘spiritual enough,’ or be ‘too conventional.’

You do need to be concerned. At prayer gatherings there are opportunities to pray, with much grace, but there is also generally the opportunity to pass. However, you may not feel comfortable enough yet.

Know that when you attend a time of prayer, your self-conscious fears about prayer may be laid to rest. We all become self-conscious sometimes, but we trust Holy Spirit to be our prompter (Luke 12:12). Trust Him.

Pray: *Thank You, Holy Spirit, for the prompts that You give me in how to pray, and the courage to participate, when I feel ready.*



27 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’”

Matt 21:13

Possibly you still feel too nervous about going to God’s house for a time of prayer?

Would it help if you prayed about it? Maybe you could begin gently, asking one other person to pray with you, either about any concerns on your heart or theirs, or to pray with you before you attend the prayer meeting?

Remember, Jesus regularly took time to pray. Also, while He said to pray in secret (Matt 6:6), He also said, *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them”* (Matt 18:20).

Come and join in the prayer fellowship before the Lord.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for the reminder to gather with others in Your name. Please strengthen me as I step out in faith.*

28 September

“He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” Matt 21:13

Do you sometimes avoid going to God’s house for a time of worship?

Yes, during Covid, we were counselled to stay home for protection. Then, once we were finally free to gather again, we needed to wear masks, and to keep our distance. Since then, you may not have re-developed the habit of worshipping in public.

Are you ready to come back now?

The author of Hebrews reminds us, *“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near”* (Heb 10:25 NLT).

Earlier this year, I had my left hand in a cast for a short time. As such, the parts of my body could not perform together as they usually would. It was challenging. When we are missing from the body of fellowship, our loss diminishes the rich fellowship otherwise possible. Come, be encouraged. Pray: *Dearest Triune God, please flood me with Your strength and wisdom as I fight my fear and discomfort in resuming regular attendance.*



29 September

“... my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” Isa 56:7

Do you need prayer? Would you like intercessory prayer for God’s healing grace? Are you weighed down or worried? Come. Come to the *“house of prayer for all peoples”* (Isa 56:7). Come to God’s house (Matt 21:13).

We are called to journey with others, that we may be encouragers of one another (Heb 10:25).

Come too to receive prayer support. You may receive the oil of anointing or simply a comforting hand on your shoulder as you pray together before God’s throne of grace.

Come to God’s house of prayer, that others may intercede for your needs.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for inviting me in. Thank You for those You have invited to walk beside me in the Father’s house of prayer.*

30 September

"... my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Isa 56:7

Now that another devotional is ending, my prayer is that you have been inspired to walk in faithfulness to God each day for His glory.

Begin each day with your Lord, consciously seeking His will throughout the day, worshipping Him with gladness, including times of fellowship in God's house of prayer, and asking God to bless all you will meet along the way.

Confess your shortcomings as soon as they happen (1 John 1:9). He is the God of second chances. Be bold in sharing your faith, and ask the Lord to help you to stay faithful. Seek to reflect His love and light wherever you go, with purity, humility, gentleness, kindness, wisdom, and grace.

Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for being my Lord and Reconciler.

Please help me to honour You in all my ways and to share my faith. I am grateful for Your love and strengthening, and for the fellowship of others.



"Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

God has given each of us a gift from [H]is great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to [H]im forever and ever! Amen. (1 Pet 4:8, 10-11 NLT)

The Holy Spirit was the inspiration behind these thoughts and we pray that they will encourage, challenge and stretch you in your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the will of the Heavenly Father.

Gelly McAuliffe-Bunker for PURE Devotional Ministry



Notes

**Scripture
quotations
marked** **are taken from**

ESV *English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

NET *NET Bible copyright © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com>. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

NIV *New International Version®, Copyright © 1973,1978,1984 by International Bible Society®. Used by permission.*

NLT *New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.*