

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). 2024



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 glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit". (2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB)*

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 January

*"Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!"
And instantly the leprosy disappeared." Luke 5:13 NLT*

As we begin this new year, let us willingly come to the Lord in faith.

We have just celebrated the newborn Christ Child. We could do this because of God's willingness to submit to incarnation. Jesus chose to be enfleshed. He chose to know the experience of living life among us. Jesus chose to submit to life in this fallen world.

Further, Jesus chose to step out of the perfection of the heavenly realms to become a crying, pooping, helpless Baby.

As we begin a new year, are we willing to submit to God's perfect will for our lives? Are we prepared to say with Jesus, "I am willing" (Luke 5:13)? As a new year begins, let us embrace this new start.

Pray: Dearest Father God, I willingly choose to hear Your will, to know Your will, and to follow in obedience. Please enable me by Your strength.

2 January

*“Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!”
And instantly the leprosy disappeared.” Luke 5:13 NLT*

What does willingness look like for you today? Are there changes that need to be made to your schedule, your priorities?

2024 is a new opportunity to live the life God wants you to live. Take some time today, or over this next week, to reflect on God’s call on your life. Pray to Holy Spirit to open your ears and understanding. Perhaps this new year is a call to a new season, a new attitude, a new relationship, a new space for giving of your time, talents, or funds.

On this, Day 2 of 2024, begin a habit of stillness before the Lord. Pray a simple prayer and then invite Him to speak to you (John 14:26).

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, I come before You in worship, trust, and a willingness to be obedient. Please prompt my walk and my choices.



3 January

*“Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!”
And instantly the leprosy disappeared.” Luke 5:13 NLT*

When the leprous man asked, Jesus declared, *“I am willing”* (Luke 5:13). Are you willing to respond to Holy Spirit prompts?

When God calls on you to be His instrument, will you declare like Jesus, *“I am willing”* (Luke 5:13)?

When Jesus walked this earth, He was attentive to Father God’s prompts and instructions. Before Jesus left this earth, He declared that He was sending out His followers (John 17:18). We are included in those “sent” as we are among *“those who will believe in me through their word”* (John 17:20).

Let us be attentive to God’s leading. Let us be willing to be sent. Let us declare with Jesus, *“I am willing”* (Luke 5:13).

Pray: Dearest Creator God, I am humbled and deeply honoured that You would deign to send me. Yes, I am willing. Please send and enable me.

4 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

In the weeks just past, we rejoiced afresh that Jesus, who is God, was incarnated as a human Baby. We worship Him who would deign to be enfleshed in such a helpless form.

When we began our Christian journey, we were also helpless and much in need of daily guidance and support, dependent on spiritual elders to grow our faith through the daily bread of God’s Word.

As we step forward now, ready to declare with Jesus, *“I am willing”* (Luke 5:13), we need to recognise our dependence on God’s leading.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, I offer myself, still a learner, humbly ready to do Your will. Please wash me afresh in the Lord’s cleansing flow.



Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your
good Spirit lead me on level ground!

~ Ps 143:10



5 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

God is our Maker. Although there have been, and are, many millions of people in the world, God does not mass produce. We are each called and equipped and placed according to God’s perfect plans (Eph 2:10).

Yes, there may be similarities in the work different people undertake, but each may be coming to it with a different skill-set, a different history, a different network for support, as well as connection. We are individuals.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for how incredibly You have arranged all things in such a myriad of patterns. Thank You. Please guide me.

6 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we recognised that God has prepared a specific path for each of our lives (Eph 2:10). But God’s plan is far greater than any one of us. God is not a genie who works out all things with a sole focus on His plan for *our* lives. Our part *is* a part of His plan. We *have* a part. It is like an element in a gigantic clockwork system. It is a part which works into the majestic plan of God. But this plan is God’s. The emphasis needs to remain on Him.

Take a moment to recognise the magnitude and majesty of the One who would be able to juggle so many lives and moving pieces into a pre-planned pattern. But we are not talking about weaving fabric threads or metal cogs. These are living beings, making individual choices. Today, let us choose to honour, worship, and adore our Worthy King (Ps 95:6).

Pray: Dear God, thank You for Your perfect plan. I yield to You.



7 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we talked about how God has an amazing and intricate plan, and that I am part of it. We also acknowledged that God’s amazing and intricate plan involves the lives and individual choices of living beings.

Does that mean that God is a controlling God?

You can answer this! Did God compel you to make each individual choice of the 800 plus decisions that you made today?

I can only anticipate that you will answer, “No.” There are some decisions where our faith in a good and faithful God will direct our steps and choices. But, even in these cases, we can choose otherwise. Why? Because God created us with freedom of choice.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You. Thank You for freedom of choice. I choose to honour You and to adore You.

8 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we acknowledged that God has given us freedom of choice. We have free will. We have the will to freely choose good and nurturing and wise actions. We equally have the choice to consider or act in wilful, destructive, and foolish ways. We are not simply mechanical moving parts. When you think about it, this makes God’s plan and sovereignty even more incredible!

God has a perfect plan. Yet God’s plan is dependent on the choices of living being beings. Did God anticipate that our choices would always be compliant, good, and nurturing?

When we claim God as *“the LORD our Maker ...”* (Ps 95:6), that is what we are effectively saying. We affirm our commitment to God’s plan. Yet the will to pursue our own purposes can be stronger in us (Rom 7:19). We are a sinful people (Rom 3:23), and we yearn to pursue our own desires and passions (Jas 1:14-15). Let us honour God as Lord today.

Pray: Dearest Lord, please strengthen me to honour You as Lord today.



9 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

As we look back on yesterday, were all our choices compliant, good, and nurturing?

Possibly not. Yet God knows that we are but dust-become-flesh, and that we will, after just a ‘short’ time, return to dust.

God calls us to richness, asking us to live into the fullness and wonder of His love. Although we are here for such a short time, relative to God’s eternity, God has included us in His plan! Today, this moment, let us re-commit to obedience, honour and glory before our Great and Faithful God.

Pray: Dearest Father God, please hold me back from foolish ways.

10 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

When we act in wilful, destructive, and foolish ways, does God withdraw His love from us?

Absolutely not! God’s love is faithful and unending. Through Paul God assures us that *“neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom 8:38-39 NIV).

Our God is a Good, Good Father.



Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ~ Rom 8:34c NIV



11 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

When our actions are wilful, destructive, and foolish, does God protect us from the consequences?

No. God is a good and wise Father. Recall Jesus’s parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). The father allowed his rebellious younger son to freely embrace his choices. The father did not forbid his rebellion, nor withhold the funds which freed the son to pursue it.

Neither does God stop us from our foolish, rebellious, or destructive ways. Like the father in the parable, God waits.

Our God is a Good, Good Father. Today, *“let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...”* (Ps 95:6).

Pray: *Dearest Father God, please forgive my foolish choices.*

12 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

When our actions are wilful, destructive, and foolish, does God leave us to face the consequences alone?

No, I believe that God is still with His children (Heb 13:5), directing them back to His will, and putting beside us those who will guide us toward His way of truth (Jas 5:19-20).

Bring to mind a GPS system which recalculates in order to direct us in a new or adjusted path toward our final destination. I believe that God’s love works in a similar way. The GPS does not ‘take over’ controls of the car; it recalculates. Neither does God take over control of our decisions. He finds new ways to redirect us back to His path.

But, like the prodigal son, there may be consequences. He, likely, had lost weight during his forced fast (Luke 15:16). He had also made poor choices, and lost face with his brother (15:30), as well as time away from his beloved father. Sin has consequences (Rom 6:23).

Pray: Dear God, I kneel before You in humble adoration. Thank You for grace.



13 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

When they act in wilful, destructive, and foolish ways, do we withdraw our love from others?

Look to the Lord. It is God’s plan that His children encourage one another. Through Paul, God tells us to *“encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing”* (1 Thes 5:11).

God continues to work out His plans through us. James identified that turning *“a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins”* (Jas 5:20). Let us be those invested enough in the welfare of another to turn them back.

Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, thank You for prompting my conversations.

14 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we remembered God’s call to encourage one another (1 Thes 5:11) and to be ready to call another back to the way of truth (Jas 5:19-20). God’s has plans for us (Jer 29:11), but does not plan for us to live our lives in isolation. God places us in communities. Communities are important for our ongoing mental health and spiritual development. The author of Hebrews warns us against *“neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”* (Heb 10:25).

Have you got a community around you? It can happen that we *“Come ... bow down in worship ...[and] kneel before the LORD our Maker ...”* (Ps 95:6) yet do not make meaningful connections with those around us. Is that your experience? I know that Covid pushed us into isolation. It even pushed us apart when we had opportunity to be together. I know that there are still Covid cases in our communities. We seek to remain healthy, but we also need to commune. Ask God to direct you to your people.
Pray: *Dearest Lord, please help me make nurturing connections.*



15 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we talked about the importance of community.

Sometimes we can feel disconnected from others because we are going through a tough season. Our attention is devoted to getting through, and we simply do not have capacity to extend care to others.

If this is your experience now, have you forewarned your closest friends? They would welcome being invited in to offer care and support in this season. Even if they have not ‘bothered to check’ on you, they still care. Give them the benefit of the doubt, and reach out.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, I feel so alone; thank You for Your faithfulness.*

16 January

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1 Thes 5:11

Do you sometimes find that your mind falls into a pattern of expecting the worst?

It could be that you are carrying extra stress, possibly not sleeping well enough to awaken refreshed and rested, and so you can become an easier target for the enemy. For your first strategy, do a comparative test between the issue you are facing and the vast omnipotence of our Mighty God. Let us get things back into better perspective.

Now, take your eyes fully off the problem, and focus them fully on God. Keep them there. Now breathe deeply, and look around. Notice the blessings around you, the peace within, and give thanks to God.

Pray: *Thank You, Triune God, for Your faithful love and provision.*



But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ~ Heb 3:13



17 January

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1 Thes 5:11

Recently we were talking about community and the disconnect we experience when we become consumed by pressing needs.

Sometimes God will give us a prompt that we are about to enter a ‘tunnel.’ While in the tunnel, we may be hit with ‘tunnel-vision.’ Our concerns are all consuming. If God gives you a tunnel prompt, be open with those closest to you. They truly care about you, and will likely be willing to be your support crew. Let them in. We have been their support crew. Now we switch sides. Do not let pride keep you from honest transparency. God called us to community (1 Thes 5:11).

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for the ‘heads up.’ Please help me to share.*

18 January

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1 Thes 5:11

Could there be a situation where encouraging one another (1 Thes 5:11) conflicts with calling another back to the way of truth (Jas 5:19-20)?

There can be situations where we can recognise that another appears to be wandering from God’s true path. Endeavour to not say or do anything which might appear to encourage them in this. Pray and ask God for wisdom in the right words to use or the right actions to take. Ask God too to bring beside them those to whom they will listen.

As God opens the way, begin by listening well, to God and to them. As we listen, we show ourselves open to hearing what is on their hearts. We may find that there is a misunderstanding or an assumption behind their straying behaviour. Pray for the right words, that they may return.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, please guide me by Your wisdom, that I may be Your instrument in guiding the other back. Thank You.



19 January

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1 Thes 5:11

Might there be situations where it is more important to emphasise God’s faithful love, even when the other is straying?

Sometimes the deepest need in our friend’s life is to know that God loves and accepts them just as they are. They might have an unconfessed sin or addiction which is drawing them away. Pray and ask God, but it may be that He will call you to start by simply showing them faithful love. Create a safe space for them to feel that they can share. Then, after practising attentive listening (Jas 1:19), you may be given a word to share (Luke 12:12). Share with grace, humility, and gentleness, and you may be God’s instrument in bringing the other back (Jas 5:19-20).

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You that I can depend on You to guide my listening and my actions, and to supply the right words.

20 January

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1 Thes 5:11

Have you ever felt that you were or met exactly the right person at just the right time?

Yesterday we talked about how God may lead you to be His instrument in speaking His truth into the life of another. This was after we had practised loving and attentive listening.

Often it is because we are humbly committed to practising loving and attentive listening that God can work through us. If we are not prepared to listen attentively to God, we are less likely to hear His prompts or be ready to follow His guidance on the words to share. *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”* (Jas 1:19). Be ready to listen first.

Pray: *Dear God, I seek to humbly listen. Thank You for Your Word.*



21 January

“... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” Ps 95:7

Yesterday we talked about being the right person at the right time.

As we listen well, we hear God’s prompting and how He would have us speak and act. Maybe He is calling you today?

As Eli advised Samuel, *“Go, ... and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place*” (1 Sam 3:9).

Is God calling you? Be at the place to which He has directed or is calling you, and be ready to say with Samuel, *“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears”* (1 Sam 3:9). God asks us to be ready. This readiness is an openness of mind, heart, and spirit. God will do the equipping and leading.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You that You would choose to use me as Your instrument. I humbly and gratefully appreciate Your incredible, ongoing faithfulness in so many ways. I honour and worship You.*

22 January

"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7

God is a truly mighty and faithful God. He is true to His promises, and will bring to pass all of His plans.

When we 'just happen to be at the right place at the right time,' it is likely that we were unconsciously following God's prompting. God knows His plans for us (Ps 139:16; Jer 29:11).

How can we be more attentive to God's prompts, rather than unconsciously following? Spend time with Him.

Pray: Dearest Lord, I worship You. How amazing that You have already pre-planned my days. I am keen to follow Your will.



Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

~ Ps 139:16



23 January

"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7

Yesterday we talked about how God has pre-planned each day we will live out before any has come to pass (Ps 139:16). He cares for us as a Good Shepherd (Ps 95:7). He is with us, and guiding us, even when we respond unconsciously.

Do you want to respond more consciously? Reach out and grasp His leading hand, through His Word and in prayer. God is faithful. He will continue to lead you to the work He has planned for you (Eph 2:10).

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for holding me in Your grip, guiding me by Your wisdom, and covering me with Your strength and protection. I am grateful, and offer You my worship and adoration.

24 January

"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7

Our God is a Good Shepherd. *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* (John 10:11). God knows that we are His and He cares for us. Part of that care is a foreplanning for us. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Eph 2:10).

God knows His plans, and He has created us for a purpose. Does that mean that God could not achieve these plans without us?

No, God is omnipotent. All things are possible for Him (Matt 19:26). God simply chooses to allow people to have a part in His plan. He is not dependent on us. He simply prefers to work with and through us to achieve His purposes. It is our honour for His glory.

Pray: Dearest Triune God, thank You for the privilege of working with You.



25 January

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Eph 2:10

We have the honour of being sent by God as His instruments.

That the Creator of the universe would choose to do this is almost incomprehensible. Yet, as Paul reminds the Ephesians, *"we are his workmanship"* (Eph 2:10).

Does it follow that these good works would flow naturally and without much effort on our part?

No, we are to *"walk in them."* To me that suggests that they still require effort. They are *"prepared beforehand"* for us, but we still need to rely on God's strength, wisdom, and protection to achieve them.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for choosing me to achieve this work for Your glory. Thank You for Your empowerment, and for each one with whom I have the opportunity to work out this plan.

26 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

Today, let us remember those who have gone before us, and each one who will come after us, that they too might appreciate and accept their call to God’s plan.

Some of those who have gone before us may have been instrumental in guiding us toward God and His plan for us. We are thankful that they interceded. For our part, let us pray for those beloved to us who do not yet know the Lord. We can pray that they will meet their Saviour through our lives, and that they will accept Him, our Lord Jesus, as their Saviour too.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for each person You have brought into my life, whether as family, friends, work, study, or other sphere colleagues and companions. I pray that You may draw them nearer to a salvific relationship with You, in Jesus’s mighty name.



27 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

We are *“the flock under [God’s] care”* (Ps 95:7), but does He sometimes call us to be His instruments in caring for others?

I have noticed the way that God goes before in His preparation of people for the works He has created them to achieve. It may be that you are invited to volunteer in a new sphere, and come to recognise that God has gifted you with special skills. Or you feel drawn to a particular career path because of a positive or negative experience by yourself or someone close to you. Then God reveals that it was His call all along (Eph 2:10).

When that happens, we may be ‘blown away’ by how completely God has gone before us, sometimes by decades.

Pray: Dearest Triune God, thank You for how incredibly You pre-plan.

28 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

Have you noticed God’s pre-planning in the skills He gives to those who touch our lives? I have noticed that the family who face a complicated health issue ‘just happen’ to have a relative skilled in that sphere. Those who have crushing legal issues ‘just happen’ to have a relative skilled in that legal sphere, and is not just familiar with ‘the vibe of the thing.’

What does that mean? We can continue to hold tight to our trust in God through all challenges, all seasons, and all crossroads. God is faithful.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for going before us.*



Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

~Deut 31:8 NLT



29 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

God has great plans for you.

We know that God has great plans, but do we sometimes become fearful that it will take us too long to discover what those plans look like? Do we treat God’s plans like an Escape Room? We become fretful that we will not solve the mystery with enough time to achieve the plans and bring God the glory.

Relax! God knows you. He knows you more intimately than you know yourself. Remember too that these are God’s plans. He is bringing them to pass. Trust that He will open and shut doors to achieve them.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for the confidence in Your leading.*

30 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

Yesterday we addressed our fear that we might lose time in figuring out God’s plans for us. But there are other fears that we may hold about God’s plans. Are you afraid that you do not have what it takes?

Let me set your mind at ease. We do **not** have what it takes. We are fully reliant on God for His enabling for the *“good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10).

So what are we to do with this fear? We rest in God, giving all fear to Him. *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”* (1 Pet 5:7 NIV).

As we affirmed yesterday, God is working to bring these plans to pass. We do not need to fear. Instead, be humbly expectant of His leading. *“[M]y yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matt 11:30).

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for how You walk beside me in these good works, co-sharing the weight as I am strengthened by God. Thank You.



31 January

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10

Our Triune God is working in us and with us to achieve the *“good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10).

God has prepared these good works. And He wants to share them with us. He shares in the carrying (Matt 11:30), and He shares by telling. How does He do that?

God reveals His will through His Word. We can know His will by spending time in His Word. In this way, God opens our understanding to the things which matter to Him. God also shows us His ways of achieving His plans, through the life of Jesus, and His obedience, and through the many stories shared in the Bible. As this month ends, let us recommit to Bible-time.

Pray: Thank You, Triune God, for Your Word, Your leading, and for wisdom.

1 February

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

As this second month begins are any of our New Year's resolutions still going? If you did not last month, I suggest making a resolution to read God's Word each day.

Why?

I recommend daily Bible reading so that you open opportunities for a daily chat with your Creator. This conversation is potentially the most important one you will have all day.

How can we say, *"I will listen to what God the LORD says"* (Ps 85:8) if we never take the time to be attentive?

In all reality, if we do not prioritise time with God, our relationship will suffer. Is now a good time? Can you spare just five minutes now? If not five, can you find two minutes? Let us begin a new pattern of 1:1 time with God. You will very likely find that you grow through it, will notice when it is delayed or missed, and will carry a deeper peace in your heart.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You that You want to spend 1:1 time with me.*



2 February

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Jas 4:8a

Have you ever had pen-pals or been in a long-distant relationship? If so, you may be able to affirm the importance of maintaining regularity of contact when incidental contact is less likely. They are not part of your daily life.

With our church, school, university or work friends, we will likely have lots of incidental contact. We pass each other going to and fro. Sometimes we may also catch-up outside of our 'normal' spheres. For long-distance relationships, though, being intentional is essential.

When we commit to spending time in God's Word each day, we are being intentional about opening an opportunity, and God will draw closer.

Pray: *Dear God, thank You that You draw closer as I draw closer.*

3 February

"I will listen to what God the LORD says" Ps 85:8a

Listening well is a really uncommon and underappreciated skill. It is underappreciated as a skill to develop, but it is appreciated by those who are the joyful recipients of attentive listening. It is an incredibly affirming experience to feel 'heard.'

The Hebrew word for 'listen' also includes obedience. When the Sons of Korah sang, *"I will listen to what God the LORD says"* (Ps 85:8a), they were making a commitment to obedience as well as hearing.

Yet, if we do not listen well, we will not know how, why, what, or whom to obey! To obey God we will need to listen attentively. Practise it often.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the gift of listening which You gave to those who came to seek Your help. Please equip me to listen well.



O Lord, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

~ Ps 141:1



4 February

"I will listen to what God the LORD says" Ps 85:8a

Listening is an important skill. Listening helps the other person to feel heard. But listening is also important for what can be discerned through attentive listening. We can learn.

When we read the Bible regularly, it is our way to *"listen to what God the LORD says"* (Ps 85:8a). This tells us about God, about the things which are important to Him, and about God's character. It also shows us some of the ways that people have interacted with God in the past. Perhaps most importantly, the Bible shows us the story of God's love.

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You that we can draw closer to You and learn more about You through Your Word. Thank You for inspiring it.

5 February

"I will listen to what God the LORD says" Ps 85:8a

When Jesus shared His parables, He spoke in language which was familiar to His hearers. Jesus also spoke of things which made most sense to those listening then.

Does that mean that God's Word may not make sense to us?

Our eternal God can still speak to the people of this time. God wants to speak to His people. If you are struggling to understand, pray and ask Him to lead you to those who will help you.

Sometimes we can struggle to understand the words of another because their native language is different from ours. If it will help, look for a version of the Bible which uses more contemporary language, but be sure that it is a well-respected translation, such as NLT. There are also electronic versions available. However you read or listen, soak in God's Word.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for the insights You brought to those who wrote the books of the Bible, and to the contemporary translators.



6 February

"I will listen to what God the LORD says" Ps 85:8a

Do you enjoy history? Do you like to explore how different everyday life was lived at various times in history?

Possibly you are part of in-person or online groups where you hear about discoveries and historical records about earlier times.

In a similar way, scholars are unearthing new information about former practises, or are making connecting discoveries across sciences. These may give us greater clarity about practices in biblical times unfamiliar to us. There may be gaps in *our* general knowledge, even if these facts are known to others. As we grow in our faith journey, our discernment grows. We get a deeper sense of God's character, His story, and our part. Let us commit to persevering, to know more, and become more like God.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for growing me in knowledge and wisdom.

7 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Are you prepared to be inconvenienced for the sake of those you love?

In the crazy-busy world in which we now live, it can be tempting to fill our days with plans and activities. This does not mean that we are always on the go. Our times of rest can be planned too. And planning times of rest is definitely important.

But what happens when we are needed? What happens when someone we care about hits a ‘road-block’? Are we prepared to lay down our lives? Are we prepared to postpone or sacrifice our plans so that we can be there for them? People need to be prioritised before plans.

Pray: Dearest Lord, please forgive me for the times that I wanted to prioritise my plans before the needs of others.



8 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Yesterday we affirmed that people need to be prioritised before plans.

Do the people in your life know that you are available to them, even when you seem busy? If not, can you find a way today to let them know that you are prepared to *“lay down [your] life for [your] friends”* (John 15:13)?

What would that look like?

First, do you spend time looking at your phone or another device instead of engaging in person-to-person communication with them? Pushing aside your device lets them know that they are more important to you.

Second, can you begin to make room in your busy schedule for a ‘buffer zone’? This would open your capacity to be able to respond.

Pray: Dearest Lord, You excelled at One-to-one contact. Please help me to juggle my priorities so that my beloveds can know their importance to me.

9 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Do you have close family around you?

In Genesis we are told to leave and cleave. “... a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24 NIV). In time, they may have children, who also grow to leave and cleave.

As this unfolds and families grow toward independence, those who do not leave may be left behind to care for aging parents. They lay down their lives and agendas in honouring them (Exod 20:12). Often they also carry the heavier responsibility for parent-care.

Let us not forget these siblings. Continue to keep them connected to extended families.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for family. Thank You for siblings who care for elderly parents. Please help us to honour them and keep them connected.



And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. ~ Eccl 4:12



10 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Yesterday we mentioned the care of aging parents, and those siblings responsible. In some cases, they are the only ones left in the home state.

Although we have moved away, and may not have the opportunity for regular contact, it is important to stay connected. Know the struggles of both sibling and parents. Be prepared to lay down your life and agenda when needed (John 15:13). Do not miss today’s chance to shine love.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for the privilege of family. Please help me to be wise in plans and in maintaining connections.

11 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Sometimes the family with whom we have our strongest and closest connections is our chosen ‘family.’ These are the dearest friends who have become like siblings, parents, or children to us. They are beloved.

Would you be prepared to lay down your life for them?

We can often show the depth of our love by how willing we are to be inconvenienced. We are willing to pick up the phone, to be available for coffee catch-ups, or to take that 3am phone call that everyone dreads. Jesus Himself called non-blood relatives His brothers and sisters (Mark 3:33-35).

Pray: Dearest Lord, please forgive me for the times that I wanted to prioritise my plans before the needs of others.



12 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

In his letter, James warns us about plan-making ahead of God. “[Y]ou do not know what tomorrow will bring ... you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’” (Jas 4:14-15).

James did not want us running ahead of God. We can come before the Lord and make plans. But we still need to be prepared to hold them loosely.

This would appear to be what Jesus did when He met Zacchaeus. Luke records that Jesus “entered Jericho and was passing through” (Luke 19:1). Yet, after meeting Zacchaeus, Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today” (5). Perhaps Jesus responded to God’s instructions.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, I seek to stay attuned to Your instructions so that I may be where I am needed.

13 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Tomorrow is a special day. It is a day which is marked by and points to love.

For the world, tomorrow is Valentine’s Day. This is a feast remembered annually to acknowledge St. Valentine but, this day is celebrated most publicly as a day of love. It is important to many for the giving and receiving of Valentine’s Day cards and gifts.

Tomorrow is also an important day in the Church’s calendar. It is also a day pointing to love. It is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, when we prepare to remember the taking of Christ’s life, given in love (John 15:13). Today, tomorrow, and each day, keep your eyes on God.

Pray: Dear God, Thank You for Your generous, self-giving, faithful, and unfathomable love.



14 February – Ash Wednesday

“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Gen 2:7

On this Ash Wednesday, we recall that we are but dust.

We rejoice that God breathed life into the dust He formed (Gen 2:7). We rejoice that we have breath, and we thank God.

With our breath we can honour God in speech, in singing, and in musical renditions. Through using the breath in our lungs, we can also exercise our bodies in service, in dance, in worship, and in witnessing to the power of our God.

Give glory to God. Even if you do not wear a mark of ashes today, you can shine the light of God through your love.

Pray: Oh Lord, thank You for the breath in my lungs. I seek to honour You through all I do and say.

15 February

"... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Gen 2:7

The breath that we breathe may be delightfully and blessedly natural. Praise God.

For others of us, each breath is a challenge. In some cases, like the woman with the issue of blood, it may seem as though we have spent all we had, and more besides, trying to find answers to this breathing challenge (Mark 5:25-26). As brothers and sisters, let us pray.

Pray: Oh Father God, please bring relief to this beloved child of Yours. Please bring beside them those who can help, support, and encourage, with wisdom, in Jesus's mighty name.



Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ~ Jer 29:12-13



16 February

"... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Gen 2:7

There will be times when we come face to face with the terrible pain or challenges that others have experienced. What do we do?

We listen, and we stand with them. We acknowledge the difficulty of journeying through this broken and fallen world. At the right time, we use our breath to offer them our prayer support.

The right time will be after we have listened well. The right time may be later when we are alone with God. The right time may be as we use our breath in offering practical help.

Pray: Dearest Father God, please come beside this beloved child of Yours in a special way today. Help them to know that You are holding them.

17 February

“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Gen 2:7

Yesterday we talked about the incredible challenges that others face. Please remember to prioritise self-care, even as you journey with another. It is likely that you are *not* the only one on whom they are depending. If you *are*, you need a team around you to help you in your support duties, to give you support, and to occasionally substitute in for you. Although you alone may carry the responsibility, you do not have to carry them alone. Gather your team. Look to God and follow His guidance on who to bring beside you. God will give you wisdom (Jas 1:5-8).
Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for Your guidance and wisdom.*



18 February

“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Gen 2:7

Today you may be struggling to breath normally. It may be because you feel overwhelmed by what has happened in your life or in the lives of those beloved to you. If you have primary responsibility, make sure that you have a support team. If you are part of a support team, it is still good to inform those closest to you not impacted by this support that you are managing this drain on your well-being. By the way, if you find the word ‘drain’ challenging, please understand that a commitment to support another in this way *will* have an impact on your energies, your heart, mind, spirit, and your own physical and emotional wellbeing. This is true even when your heart is *fully* committed to a selfless and generous response.
Pray: *Dearest Lord, please strengthen me as I give support for Your glory.*

19 February

“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Gen 2:7

Whether it is you or a loved one who is facing a difficult season, drawing a deep and regular breath can be challenging.

Turn to the One who gave us breath (Gen 2:7). He has been walking with you this whole time. Turn your eyes to Him. He has not left you nor will He ever forsake you (Heb 13:5).

God cares about every detail of your life. He watches over you (Ps 139:1-3). As a Loving Father, God does not want you carrying loads or burdens beyond your capacity (Matt 11:30). As for worries, these are prompts from the enemy, invitations to doubt God (Gen 3:1). These, like the heavy burdens, are to be laid at the Lord's feet (1 Pet 5:7). Come in trust and worship of our Mighty and All-knowing God. Come and know rest.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for taking these weights from me.



20 February

“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Gen 2:7

Maybe instead the difficulties you experience in breathing have continued past the stage of trauma-induced anxiety.

Perhaps you are now facing further tests, investigations, and uncertainty.

Rest in the loving arms and faithful presence of the God who created you (Gen 2:7). He is with you. He is guiding you.

Ask Him to bring into your life those who will recognise your symptoms, and be wise in treatment. Ask Him to help you breath with ease again. Ask God for healing. If you have not, gather a team for support and prayer.

Pray: Dearest Father God, You called me into life. Please help me to live life in fullness, for Your glory.

21 February

"... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Gen 2:7

We have touched on struggles to breathe. It may be a one-off event that lasted for a very short time. On the other hand, it may be a constricted feeling you feel when under pressure, or it may happen intermittently. If this is you, and you have not taken the opportunity for a medical investigation, it might be worth mentioning on your next visit.

Maybe instead you are past the stage of still attempting to clarify. Perhaps you have received a diagnosis and are managing the changes.

In either case, we pray that you may experience relief with breathing. We pray that you may know the closeness of the One who gave us breath. We pray with you and for those who are investigating with you, and those who are treating you. May you know relief, in Jesus's mighty name.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for life-giving and -sustaining breath.



Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! ~ Ps 150:6



22 February

"... then the Lord God formed ... and the man became a living creature." Gen 2:7

We are God's creatures, created in His image (Gen 1:26-27). God invites us into fellowship with Himself. Further, our Lord Jesus came to live life on earth, as we do, and He died that we might know unity. This is a unity with God, through Jesus's death and resurrection. This is also lived out in unity with one another (John 17:17-23). We are called to see God's image in each other, and to reach out with love and encouragement (John 13:34).

Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for Your incredible plan. You created us. Through Jesus You have rescued us. Please fill us to love generously.

23 February

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

As we walk this journey of Lent, we recognise that we are the grateful recipients of what Jesus achieved. Out of His great love, He laid down His life for His friends (John 15:13). We are His friends, walking in His grace and, through His resurrection, reunited with the Father.

Although we once walked in the ways of the world, we have received the grace of Jesus Christ into our hearts and, through our lives, we acknowledge Him as our Lord and Saviour.

Have you accepted what Jesus achieved on your behalf?

If not, today is the perfect day!

Please contact a pastor or Christian friend at your church or please feel free to email me. If God is whetting your spirit to know more about what Jesus achieved, please reach out. God is calling you to spend eternity with Him. He probably will not speak with an audible voice, but God can still touch our hearts and spirits as He draws us closer to Himself. Please listen attentively. Then this may be a most soul-refining Lent for you!

Pray: Dearest Father God, please continue to draw the reader to Yourself.



24 February

“Greater love ... lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

You may not have experienced a totally soul-refining moment yesterday. Your spiritual trajectory may not have totally changed. However, you can worship and thank God for His work in your life.

This lent, commit to new steps in your faith journey. Maybe there are new places where you can plant seeds. Maybe there is another friend, work colleague, or neighbour with whom you can share your testimony. As you hear their stories, new spaces for seed-planting may come into view.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for Your prompts and guidance. Please help me to keep my eyes on where You are at work, that I might help You.

25 February

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 NIV

How do you respond when you have a task set before you? Do you procrastinate and wait until the last possible time for completion? Do you commit and push ahead, even when it might not yet be due?

In this Lenten Season, is there something to which Holy Spirit is calling you to attend? Yes, there are still several weeks of Lent remaining. But would it be better to undertake the work now rather than later?

You could follow the Lord’s role-modelling. *“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51 NIV).

Rather than wait until the bitter end, consider completing or committing to the task today.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for the patience You have shown me. I know what I need to do, and I will achieve it.



26 February

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 NIV

Yesterday we saw how *“Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51 NIV). Are we still procrastinating?

Consider too that there may be positive breakthroughs which follow obedience. Some to whom God calls prefer to delay their acceptance of Jesus as their Saviour until later in life. Yet, consider the outpouring joys and blessings you have received since you became a Christ-follower. None of those might have been available until you made that decision.

Do you have family members delaying? Maybe you could share your testimony with them, that they may receive their Saviour.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, please guide me on the best time and space for sharing my testimony, and please minister to my loved ones.

27 February

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 NIV

Are you still holding out before making a firm commitment to Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?

Please consider making today the day. This may be the prompt that God has for you today. And, who knows, God may have a special task for you to complete before the day is out (Est 4:14).

Our Heavenly Father is calling you back to fellowship with Himself. Our Lord Jesus faced the cross in order that you might be freed from the sins which hold you, and which are drawing you toward death (Rom 6:23). Holy Spirit is bringing beside you those who are encouragers. We join with our Triune God in praying that you may know Jesus as your Saviour.

Pray: Dearest Lord, I am grateful that You endured the cross that I might be reconciled to the Father. Please give me the courage to commit.



What good is it for someone to gain the whole world,
and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

~Luke 9:25 NIV



28 February

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 NIV

Jesus is our perfect example of determination in faithfully following God's will.

What about you? Is Holy Spirit prompting you on a seed to sow, a testimony to share, a habit to break, or a connection to renew? Be obedient.

Do not let the enemy distract you with fears or the enticements of selfish desires. Follow through on what you know to do.

Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, please affirm Your call and strengthen me.

29 February

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51 NIV

We affirm Jesus’s dedication to faithful obedience. Abraham too showed selfless focus on following God’s will.

God told him, *“Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you”* (Gen 22:2).

And how did Abraham respond? *“Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him ... his son Isaac”* (3).

Although this was a heart-breaking request, Abraham obeyed. Generations later, although knowing what lay ahead of Him, *“Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51 NIV).

May our lives demonstrate such faithful obedience too.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for sacrificing Yourself so that we might know reconciliation and hope. Thank You for Your resolute faithfulness.*



1 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Are you part of a regular prayer gathering?

In different seasons, we may find ourselves praying more regularly or more deeply. Then somehow we can fall out of the habit.

If you are currently in a ‘prayer drought’ season, let me encourage you to start again as this month begins. I am not asking you to commit for a month (if that feels overwhelming). Simply start today, and take it one day at a time. A regular prayer time helps. Maybe you can sandwich your day in prayer, morning and evening, and open-topped if you forget. Let us start now, delighting in God’s availability at any time (1 Thes 5:17).

Pray: *Dear God, thank You that I can come to You at any time, and You will hear me, as well as receive me. Thank You for listening.*

2 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

During His lifetime on earth, Jesus regularly went away to pray privately, often during the night time hours, and on the mountains (Luke 6:12).

Do you have a special time and place where you prefer to pray? If not, you could ask Holy Spirit to prompt you toward a place where you can most keenly experience God’s presence with you. *“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you”* (Jas 4:8a).

Come, draw near in prayer and supplication.

Pray: Thank You, Father God, for Your incredible, faithful and ongoing love for me. Thank You for Your willingness to draw nearer. I love You.



... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me ...
~1 Eph 6:18-19a



3 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Yesterday we remembered James’s prompt about drawing near to God. When we do so, God *“will draw near to you”* (Jas 4:8a).

But that is just the first part of James’s statement. The second is *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”* (Jas 4:8b-e). If it seems like our prayers are not being heard, could it be that a sin cloud is filtering our petitions? Ask Holy Spirit to bring clarity.

Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please reveal any hidden sins and disobedience in me. I seek to be a faithful follower of my Lord Jesus.

4 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Yesterday we reminded ourselves of James’s word: *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded”* (Jas 4:8b-e).

You may be uncomfortable with the label ‘sinner.’ We are all sinners. *“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23).

That does not mean that we all sin in the same ways, as you will acknowledge. For some of us, our sins may be obvious. For others of us, our sins are known only to God. In either case, we fall short of God’s perfection. In either case, we are sinners and in no position to point fingers at anyone else’s sin.

Rather than accusing, let us be willing to extend the same grace that we have received from God (John 1:16). We all need God’s grace.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the incredible grace You have made available to me. May I fully step into it, and also offer it to others.



5 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

We heard that sin can be like a filter for our prayers. Does that mean that unanswered prayer is a sure indication of sinfulness?

No, unanswered prayer does not automatically point to undisclosed sin. It *may be* that we are being disobedient to Holy Spirit’s call to step away from a place of sinfulness. It *may be* that we are reluctant to obey Holy Spirit’s call to step forward. But unanswered prayer is by God’s decision. We are *not* called to judge others. We may be asked to call them back to the way of truth (Jas 5:19-20), but Holy Spirit does the convicting, not us. Let us be willing to pray for others, as well as extending grace.

Pray: Please forgive me, Lord, for responding judgmentally to the perceived sins of others. I rest in Your grace, and am a humble, gracious instrument.

6 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

We pray in trust, but does God always answer according to our prayers, plans, wishes, or expectations?

No, God answers as He will.

God knows His plans for goodness. He also knows us better than we know ourselves. He can anticipate our needs and how we are likely to respond in feeling passionate, upset, tested, tired, angry, moody, weird, or blissful.

If we commit our plans to Him, God may respond with a Yes, a No, or a Not Yet. God knows what will turn out for the best. We need to keep trusting in Him.

Pray: Dearest Lord, I seek to walk in Your will, for Your glory. Please hold me back from anything that is not part of Your best plan.



7 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Do we commit our plans to God, or simply ask Him to bless the plans we have already made? James warns us about boastful pre-planning (Jas 4:13-16). *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that” (15).*

God knows what we need (Matt 6:8). We can pray for God to meet our needs and, if we cannot quite articulate them, Holy Spirit will intercede for us (Rom 8:26-27).

God is a good, good Father and, we can say with Paul, *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).*

Pray: Dearest Lord, I am sorry that I do not always consult with You before racing ahead with my plans. Please forgive me. I rest in Your grace, and instead will lay my plans before You, for Your input.

8 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Jesus took three people with Him when He *“went up on the mountain to pray”* (Luke 9:28).

Are you part of a prayer group? This might be an in-person group, such as a church, Bible study, school, community, college, or work group. Perhaps you are part of an online group, which meets for prayer, praise, and pastoral support. Instead you might do a combination, meeting sometimes in person, and sometimes online. If none of these, you could ask Holy Spirit to prompt you toward a group you could join. There is comfort, support, and good fellowship in coming before the Lord together in prayer. *“And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken”* (Eccl 4:12).

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, if it is Your will, and it will enable growth in my faith and discipleship, please guide me to a suitable group.*



... your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

~Matt 6:8



9 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

How easily are you able to share details of your inner life with those who are your closest friends?

Do you feel as though you could tell them anything about yourself, and they would still want to be your friend?

This is somewhat rare among human beings, especially once past the ongoing, close fellowships of school or university. The Lord offers this level of friendship. Nothing *“will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom 8:39-39).

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for Your faithful friendship.*

10 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

You may not be prepared to share the most intimate details of your life. Can you pray with close friends? Do you pray with them?

Praying together can be a beautiful experience. We are standing (sitting/kneeling) together before our loving Heavenly Father. We come together, in faith and trust, ready to raise our concerns and each other for God’s grace and Jesus’s intercession (Rom 8:34).

It is truly beautiful to get a front seat to someone else’s offering of prayer to God.

Pray: Dear Lord, please fill me with the courage to pray aloud for and with another.



11 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Are you hesitant to pray before another because you are nervous that your prayers will not be of an appropriate level?

Who is God?

God is your Heavenly Father.

Can you imagine any earthly father who would dismiss their child’s words because they were not of a sufficient standard, or grammatically correct?

Most likely, the father would *delight* in their children’s efforts.

How much more will our Heavenly Father delight in our prayers and supplications. Have no doubts about your Father God’s willingness to listen. He will.

Pray: Thank You, Lord God, for Your willing attentiveness to Your children. We are grateful. Please help us too to be attentive listeners to our children, even in interpreting actions when no words are used.

12 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Are you hesitant to pray before another? Is it because you are concerned that they will judge the quality of your prayers, biblical knowledge, or sincerity?

Maybe you think that their prayers will be so authentic, pious, and God-honouring that you will feel like an inept imposter.

To whom are your prayers addressed? Know that God accepts your prayers. Any lingering concerns or fears of a quality-control nature may be considered as pridefulness. Trust God, and direct your prayers to Him alone. His relationship with His other child is for them to maintain.

Pray: Dear Lord, please forgive my prideful foolishness about “right” prayers. I simply seek to please You.



13 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

How amazing would it have been to hear Jesus pray to His Father?

Yes, it would have been truly amazing, not just in the words that Jesus used, but also in His attitude of prayer. Prayerful intercession, as well as prayerful attentiveness to God.

I would suggest that the sincerity of the heart committing to pray is far more important than the words used.

We know that His followers asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). The words that Jesus gave them point to an earnest relationship with their Heavenly Father (Matt 6:9–15).

May we speak the Our Father among our prayers. May we also speak the Our Father among our friends, our family, and, particularly, the children in our care, that they may know. Practise it with them.

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank You for Your witness in prayer.

14 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

We have been reflecting on the importance of praying to God. We have also touched on the public sharing of prayerful words. On that note, we can recall that Samuel’s mother, Hannah, did not vocally pray. *“Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard”* (1 Sam 1:13).

When we cannot find the words to speak, we can know that God the Holy Spirit still understands. He will interpret our words and intercede for us *“according to the will of God* (Rom 8:26-27).

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for Your faithful presence.*



Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we 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



15 March

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28

Jesus took His three friends with Him as companions. Similarly, when we gather together, we are often there as equal contributors. God is the Judge, not us (Jas 4:12). If there is an issue to be addressed, we take it to God in prayer first.

We are called to encourage and support each other, including in prayer. Come together this week, in you can, and see how God will use your prayer time.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for the faithful friendships You have gifted to me. Please help me to love them well, as You love me.*

16 March

“And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.” Luke 9:29

A few days ago we were considering how extraordinary it would be to be present with Jesus shared prayer time with His Father. It truly was a most amazing time. *“... the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white”* (Luke 9:29).

You may recall that Moses’s face also changed during conversations with God. *“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai ... Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God”* (Exod 34:29).

These passages point to the majesty and splendour of God, that conversing with Him could so alter human appearance. As we continue to hear Luke’s recount, we will see that Moses again features.

Pray: Triune God, I worship You. Thank You for the privilege of coming before You and of sharing Your Word with others. Thank You.



17 March

“And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Luke 9:30-31

Jesus was gathered with three of His disciples, Peter, John and James. Then, as Jesus was praying *“the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white”* (Luke 9:29). Jesus was transfigured before His disciples. Not only that, two heroes of the faith, representing the Law and the Prophets, appeared in glory (30-31). As Jesus asserted, God *“is not God of the dead, but of the living”* (Matt 22:32b).

Peter, John and James were given a further glimpse into Jesus’s majesty and divinity. How would we respond? How **do** we respond when we catch sight of God’s miraculous ways? Let us glorify God in honour and praise.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for this amazing revelation of Your transfiguration.*

18 March

“And ... Moses and Elijah ... appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Luke 9:30-31

Jesus said that on the two love commandments *“depend all the Law and the Prophets”* (Matt 22:40). Now, as Jesus is about to face the greatest test of His love, He meets with Moses and Elijah. They, in turn, *“spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:30-31). What Jesus was about to accomplish was to change the fate of humanity, through the laying down of His life in love (John 15:13).

Of course we know this, but Peter, John, and James might not have put all the pieces together.

Do some of our friends or family member need a little help in putting the pieces together, and accepting Jesus as their Lord and Saviour? Ask Holy Spirit to guide you into the right time and situations so that you can share what Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, please help me to reach my loved ones.*



19 March

“Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep ...”
Luke 9:32

Do we sometimes find ourselves heavy with sleep and unable to continue? Are we taking rest breaks?

This verse shows a situation where something extraordinary was almost missed due to heaviness of sleep. Does that mean that we should always be on high alert?

Of course not! We need our rest. God told us to have a weekly day of rest, our Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11). When rest is a regular part of our routine, our lives can generally stay on a more even keel. Does that mean that there will never be moments when we will be overtaken by heavy sleep. No, but they are less likely.

Pray: *Dear Triune God, thank You for commanding a weekly rest day.*

20 March

“Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep ...”

Luke 9:32

Yesterday we considered the potential costs of missing rest.

But “heavy with sleep” also suggests a sluggishness unquenched by physical sleep. It is more about distraction than sleepiness. Do we sometimes become so distracted with small details that we miss the ‘big stuff’?

For instance, might we be missing cues that Holy Spirit is setting up to call us toward God or to position us to be His instrument in calling another?

Let us remain alert, as we have an enemy very content to see us drowsy and ineffective (1 Pet 5:8). Rather than obey his wishes, follow God’s cues.

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, please help me to stay alert to Your cues.*



Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ~ 1 Pet 5:8



21 March

“Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.” Luke 9:32

What a truly amazing vision unfolded! How would you respond?

Practical Peter wanted to “*make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah*”—*not knowing what he said*” (Luke 9:33).

Peter wanted to honour Jesus and also the elders. But their time had already been, but Jesus still had things to achieve. They were human through and through. Jesus was Son of God and Son of Man.

Jesus is fully God and fully Man. We worship Him. Jesus Christ gave up His life to save us and, in doing so, freed all humanity from their debt of sin.

Pray: *Dearest God, how joyfully we put our trust in Jesus, our Saviour.*

22 March

" ... a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'" Luke 9:34-35

When John the Baptist baptised Jesus, God the Father vocally affirmed Him. *"And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'"* (Mark 1:11). Afterward *"The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness"* (12). Jesus was there *"for forty days, being tempted by the devil"* (Luke 4:2, 1-13). Then Jesus's public ministry began.

Now, as Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus of His departure, God again affirms Him. *"And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'"* (Luke 9:35)

As we draw closer to Holy Week, let us pray to the Father, remain submitted to Holy Spirit, and listen to the Lord.

Pray: *Dearest Triune God, I honour and joyfully accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. Please help me to spiritually prepare for Easter.*



23 March

" ... a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'" Luke 9:34-35

In the Book of Exodus, God's glory and perfection are linked to cloud symbolism. *"Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"* (Exod 40:35). Again, at Jesus's transfiguration, God's presence is separated through the cloud. Our Holy God separated Himself from sinful humanity (Rom 3:23). But, in Jesus, our perfect and untouchable God chose to take on flesh and live among us. Rest and rejoice in this incredible reality, and praise Him.

Pray: *Dear God, thank You for coming close to us in Jesus. Thank You for loving us so much that You would sacrifice Your Son. Please forgive me for the times that I rejected others as unworthy of attention.*

24 March

"... a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'" Luke 9:34-35

Jesus is God incarnated. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

Through our actions we were unworthy to be in God's holy presence, but He made a way. He came to us.

But God did not just come like a visitor. Jesus experienced all the challenges of life known to us (Heb 4:15), and more besides. He can empathise. Jesus also made a new way for us to have unity with God and with each other. Through His life, death, and resurrection Jesus opened the veil of separation (Luke 23:44-46; Heb 10:20).

Pray: Dear Triune God, thank You for making a way for reconciliation and unity. Please show me where I can be Your instrument in unity.



25 March

"Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate." Luke 23:11 NIV

This week we will attempt to wrestle with the ways that Jesus suffered. Jesus was mocked and tested. On many occasions, people were sent to trick Him (Luke 20:20). The enemy too tempted and challenged Jesus (Luke 4: 1-13). Have you experienced mocking and ridicule?

Sometimes people will respond with mockery or ridicule because they do not understand. It does not mean that they are ignorant, uneducated, or stupid. They may simply have not had your opportunities, or may be intelligent in a different gift set. Listen well. It is possible that they have made an assumption, have simply misheard, or are reluctant to be exposed.

Follow Jesus's example and be ready to ask clarifying questions (Mark 10:51) and to show grace.

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for Your grace. Please lead me in following Your example.

26 March

“In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.” Matt 27:41 NIV

Jesus was challenged and mocked.

Even those who are practised in Bible reading may insult or deride you. Be prepared to forgive (Luke 23:34), trusting in God’s mercy, and being ready to speak the words that Holy Spirits gives you (Luke 12:12).

We also need to be open to correction (John 14:26).

It is possible that *we* are the ones holding the False teaching. Pray for Holy Spirit’s guidance and wisdom, that you may not wander from the way of truth (Jas 5:19-20).

Pray: *Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for being my faithful Guide, leading me into truth.*



But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

~ John 14:26



27 March

“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.” John 6:66

Jesus was rejected.

Even before Jesus drew near to the cross, *“many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him”* (John 6:66). Jesus has experienced rejection, and we can expect it too (Matt 10:24-25).

We are called to be faithful (John 8:12; Luke 14:27). When tempted to stray, pray. Fall on your knees, confessing, and trust in God’s grace (1 John 1:9). When other reject you, fall on your knees and pray God’s grace over them. God is faithful, and can bring beside you His faithful followers.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, thank You for the faithful followers You send.*

28 March

“The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.” John 13:2 NIV

Jesus was betrayed.

Jesus, the purest human being to ever walk the earth, faced betrayal. We can sometimes face challenges in our relationships. We often face challenges because we are broken people. Despite our best intentions, we are too consumed with our selfish ways, focus, and desires.

The people around Jesus looked a lot like us. His apostles fought to be the ‘top dog’ (Matt 20:20-21; Luke 22:24-27). They quibbled about money (Matt 26:9), and none wanted to take the serving role (John 13:4-5).

When we argue, we often end up blaming the other. Jesus was blameless. Yet He chose to forgive. How much more do we need to offer forgiveness, humbly and willingly, and to be quick to accept the offer from another.

Pray: Oh Lord, please forgive me for my contribution to the betrayal You experienced.



29 March – Good Friday

“Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.” Matt 27:26

Jesus was stripped, humiliated, scourged, and crucified.

Jesus, the faithful teacher, the gentle healer, the wise servant-hearted leader (John 13:3-11) was disrespected, humiliated, and ultimately killed.

Are you holding grievances against some who have disrespected, humiliated or hurt you? Do you have it in your heart to forgive them? Seek God’s strength and shelter in prayer. [Please note that DV is a separate issue not addressed here. Please get help.]

Have you disrespected, humiliated or being part of inflicting hurt on others? Ask God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9). [For DV, please get help.]

Jesus took our sins on His body. By His stripes we are healed (Isa 53:5).

Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the freedom we know in You. Thank You for Your forgiveness and thank You that I am empowered to forgive.

30 March

“Then all the disciples left him and fled. Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.” Matt 26:56-57

Jesus was forsaken.

Have we faced a situation where those in whom we have made a substantial investment have chosen to forsake us? It is a tough space.

It is likely how the father of the prodigal son felt (Luke 15:12-13). It is totally understandable that Jesus likely felt forsaken when *“all the disciples left him and fled”* (Matt 26:56b). These are the ones in whom He had invested substantial time, love, and energy over the previous three years. Yet, at His arrest, they fled. Jesus, gracious Lord, was also mindful of their safety. *“Jesus answered, ‘... if you seek me, let these men go’”* (John 18:8).

When we feel forsaken, let us seek another perspective, and forgive them.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank You for Your faithful teaching and loving grace.*



31 March – Easter Sunday

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” John 11:25

Hallelujah!! Jesus is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!

What an amazing high point on which to come to the end of another devotional. Our King lives!!

Jesus’s resurrection affirms God the Father’s acceptance of Jesus’s death as a covering for our sin debt. Further, *“we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh”* (Heb 10:19-20).

We are most blessed. Looking to the Lord, let us commit ourselves, our hearts, minds, and spirits, to Him, for His glory, and our transformation.

Pray: *Dear God, thank You for coming among us in Jesus. Thank You for allowing us to be reconciled to You. Thank You for how You are moulding and shaping us to be more faithful followers. We trust You.*



"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.*

HCSB *Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999,2000,2002,2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.*

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

NLT *New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. biblegateway.com[accessed 12.12.2018]*