

I n t h e G a r d e n :
*A Journey to a Deeper and
More Powerful Place of Prayer*

I n t r o d u c t i o n

In the Garden:
A Journey to a Deeper and More Powerful Place of Prayer
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with Scott Kaczorowski

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in Louisville, Kentucky*

To keep in mind as you begin:

- This prayer book is designed to be used with the *In the Garden* Companion Prayer Binder, which can be purchased separately on our website at Thistlebend.org/store. Instructions for how to use the binder are included with the purchase.
- The Introduction lesson of this study is designed to walk you through the instructions for how to use this book and to help prepare your heart for a deeper place of prayer.
- Weeks One through Four of this book will take you through one month of guided daily prayer times. It is designed to be used over and over again to assist you in building a consistent and effective prayer life.
- Each day includes a daily Bible reading but an alternative daily Bible reading plan is included in the Appendix as well. You may also use your own Bible reading plan.
- Associated audio, video, and print resources are available through the Resources tab on our website: Thistlebend.org/resources

Introduction



DAY ONE



PREPARING TO PRAY

“Come, my soul, put on your springtime clothes and gather garlands of heavenly thoughts. You know where to go, for the ‘beds of spices’ are well known, and you have so often smelled the perfume of ‘sweet-smelling herbs’ that you will go at once to Him who is altogether lovely and find all loveliness and all joy in Him.”

—Charles Spurgeon

Giving Ourselves to Prayer: Why Should We?

The disciples spent every day with Jesus. They followed Him wherever He went and observed Him day after day. They witnessed His actions, heard His teaching, saw His relationship with His Father, and came to know His heart, His love, His mercy, and His grace. They would have been with Him often as He prayed and noticed His devotion, submission, and dependance upon His Father in prayer.

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” 2 And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”
(Luke 11:1-4)

When Jesus had finished praying, one of the disciples approached Him with a request we all need to make: Lord, please, teach us to pray. Prayer is a precious gift our heavenly Father. It is our entrance into communion with Him. Prayer opens the gates, brings us into His court, and carries us before the throne of grace. Prayer knits our heart, mind, and soul with our Lord.

Prayer is His provision,
our privilege, our help,
our need, our joy, our life breath,
our ministry, our power,
our communion, our comfort, our direction,
our wisdom, our blessing, our priority,
our reminder, and so much more.

We want to follow the disciple’s example and ask the Lord to teach us to pray. When we are in Christ, we are never apart from Him, yet in another sense, we can find ourselves “living parallel lives”—like a couple who lives in the same house, eats meals together, sleeps in the same bed, but feels completely out of touch

with one another. They may live in the same house, but they are living separate lives. This can happen in our relationship with the Lord as well. When we pray, however, we enter His presence; we connect with Him; we are choosing to abide in Him. You might think, “If I am in Christ, I do abide in Him and He abides in me.” Yes, this is true, but He calls us to actively abide in Him. The Lord has granted us entrance into communion with Him and into His presence at all times. Oh, that we would walk with Him and in Him, knowing and believing that there is nothing between us and the Lord—the ruler of the universe!

Our creator has not only given us access, but He has also invited us in. He desires that we intimately commune with Him in private, in solitude, in seclusion with Him and Him alone. He desires that we would enter into His presence in prayer at the start of our day and then remain in communion with Him throughout the day. He desires that our prayer be not merely duty but devotion, authentic devotion, developed within a safe, tender, reverent, and trusting environment under the banner of His love. Let’s read Matthew’s account of Jesus teaching the disciples to pray:

“5 And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father

forgive your trespasses. 16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. . . . 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matt. 6:5-18, 30-34)

Why should we give ourselves to prayer? Because we need Jesus every hour of every day. We want to remain in step with Him and can do nothing of eternal value without Him. So, it is good for us to seek the Lord to teach us to pray, to help us know how to know Him, to be devoted to Him, to grant us His heart, to give us His mind, to spur us on, to draw us in, and to direct us in the way. But, it is of the utmost importance that we simply pray. Prayer is one of the key spiritual disciplines for followers of Christ, yet it is so much more than that; it is a relationship. It is a relationship with our eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, holy God. Just as a man and woman in love desire to be together and communicate, so we, if we love God, will desire to be with Him and to fellowship with Him in proportion to our love for Him. Prayer is praise, thanksgiving, pleading, rejoicing, gasping, outpouring—an intimate communion. It is an ongoing dialog with our heavenly Father, our God, our beloved Lord. It is an intimate interaction, a dependent dialog with the divine. It is an outgrowth of faith, obedience, dependence, and devotion; a reverential acknowledgment of our creator, master, and owner, the one

who is the source of our very life. Prayer is “as necessary to the spiritual life as air is to the natural life.”¹ And this dialog with the Almighty is part of the fabric of the Bible. We see it throughout the Scriptures from beginning to end. Genesis 4:26 makes the first mention—“*men began to call on the name of the Lord*”—and Revelation 22:20 closes the Bible with the prayer:

And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

As the Bible is woven from beginning to end with prayer, let us weave our lives with the Lord through prayer as well. Each day, let us begin with the Lord in His Word and in prayer, continue with Him throughout the day, and bring it to a close with Him. If this kind of devotion to prayer has not been your practice, then this is an excellent time and place to start. During these next few weeks, we will be given an opportunity to draw near to our Lord, immerse ourselves in prayer, listen to Him in His Word, and pour out our heart to Him as we ask Him to help grow our heart, soul, mind, and strength in prayer.

Come, Let Us Begin

As we embark on this adventure into a deeper life of prayer, I would like to share with you a bit of the journey that led to the writing of this study. I had been asking the Lord to grow my heart to be a prepared and more useful and effective vessel of prayer. Our ministry prayer team leader had also been asking the Lord to grow everyone’s hearts for prayer. We began to pray and seek the Lord for wisdom. I was working through the Gospel of Luke and came to Luke 11 and the Lord’s Prayer. Without realizing what was happening, I was led to focus for several months on the Lord’s Prayer and the instructions of Jesus that followed.

The Lord was working to answer our requests for deeper, more intimate and powerful prayer. He brought several excellent

¹ *Aids to Religious Teaching: Bible Lessons on the Old Testament History*, Vol. 3 (London: Church Extension Association, 1892), 228.

resources to the forefront. One of them was Martin Luther's *The Way to Pray*. Pastor Wolfmueller of Hope Lutheran Church explains the background of Luther's short tract: "Early in the year 1535, Peter Beskendorf, a barber and an old friend of Luther's, asked Dr. Luther for suggestions concerning prayer. Luther responded with an open letter titled, *How One Should Pray, for Master Peter the Barber*."²

Luther's instructions for prayer call for praying through the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed, while systematically working through the Book of Psalms. By praying and meditating upon these, Luther would immerse himself in the truths they contain, which would always be woven into his heart and his mind and "be on [his] lips whenever [he would] talk to God or to [his] neighbor."³ Luther believed that these Scriptures and doctrinal truths would "mold the way we think and act and speak and pray."⁴

This seemed to be speaking exactly to what I was looking for in my prayer life. Right about this time, I came upon a commentary by R.C. Sproul regarding Luther's prayer book. Sproul writes:

At many points in my own spiritual pilgrimage, the writings of Luther have brought me comfort and encouragement . . . Yet, of all the writings of Luther, none has touched me more deeply than his *A Simple Way to Pray*, later renamed *The Way to Pray*. In it he gives us a practical method for effective prayer. By this method, this enriching approach to prayer, I am helped every day of my life. I love to pray through the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue, and the Apostles' Creed. I love to use the Psalms to deepen my prayer life."⁵

Then a dear friend shared a sermon with me by Alistair Begg from the 1980s on intercessory prayer. All of these resources and

² Pastor Wolfmueller, in his "Introduction" to Luther's 1535 tract *A Simple Way to Pray* (Hope Lutheran Church: Aurora, CO, 2006), 2.

³ Wolfmueller, 2.

⁴ Wolfmueller, 2.

⁵ R.C. Sproul, Forward to Archie Parrish, *A Simple Way to Pray: The Wisdom of Martin Luther on Prayer* (Marietta, GA: Serve International, 2009), Forward.

Scriptures seemed to be coming together in answer to my prayers. I felt compelled to have a tool of some sort to incorporate all of the pieces the Lord had brought together. So began *In the Garden*. This prayer book has been developed with the goal of helping others pursue a deeper communion with the Lord through prayer. If your prayer life has been suffering up until now, hopefully these pages will serve as a beginning. And, if you are an old veteran at prayer, may the Lord use this book as an enriching, enlightening new chapter in your prayer life.

As we walk through this prayer book, we can all be praying that the Lord would reveal His heart to us and show us how He would want each of us to be praying for ourselves and for those in our lives, especially His beloved bride, the Church, the body of Christ. As we grow in our prayer life, may we grow in knowing His heart and knowing Him.

Throughout this book, we will incorporate some of the insight, instruction, and examples from Luther for how to pray and meditate on the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed. As we practice prayer, we will learn how to pray using God's Word. We will be taught, shepherded, encouraged, blessed, and established by the One who loves us, died for us, dwells within us. Our Lord Jesus will teach us to pray and teach us *how* to pray through His Word and by His Spirit. Let's take a moment to pray:

Heavenly Father, Lord of heaven and earth, glorify and hallow your name. May your will be done! Pave the way in our hearts, lift us up and hide us in the shadow of your wings. Strengthen us and our relationship with you in every way, as your servants, as your ambassadors, and as your beloved. We long to make our time with you our utmost priority and want our prayer life with you to be forever transformed. We want our place of prayer to be in you and with you. May we live each day in communion with you according to your Word, according to your kingdom. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May we worship you in Spirit and in truth. Teach our hearts, our minds,

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our souls, and our very beings how to pray and how to live our lives utterly dependent upon you in prayer.

Abba Father, help us believe, cherish, and worship you. May we make you our refuge. May we abide in the shadow of your almighty wings as we seek you in a:

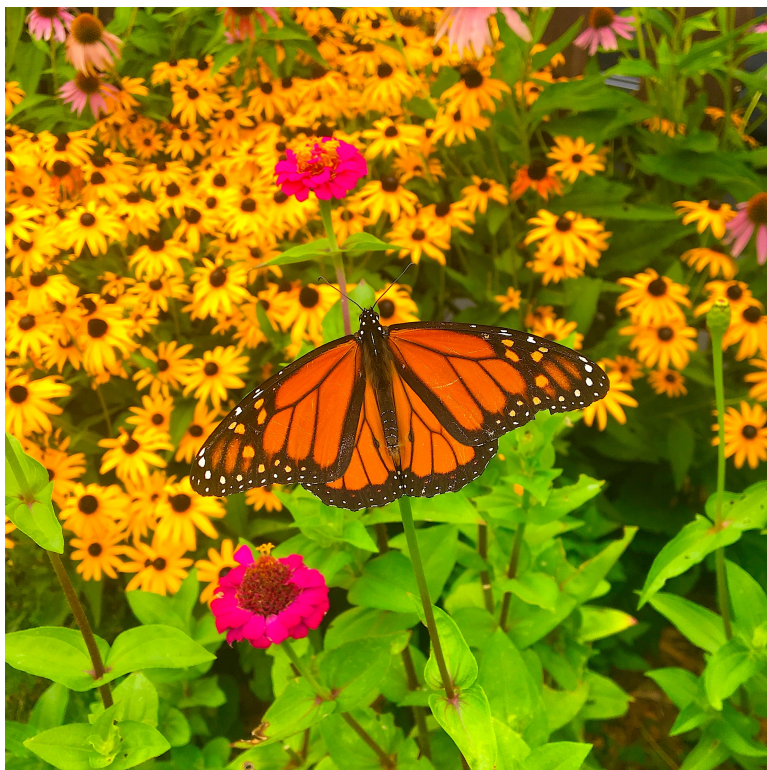
deeper,
higher,
more devoted,
private,
quiet,
holy,
grace-filled,
merciful,
life-giving,
strengthening,
faithful,
truthful,
place of prayer.

In our private prayer, we ask Father, that you would grant us by your grace the unshakable strength, assurance, and confidence that will enable us to stand firm, proclaim the gospel, walk forward in truth, minister to the poor and the needy, and rescue the weak in the face of much opposition. May you be our defense and may we draw near and desire you and what is pleasing to you. Help us drink of the waters of life. As we grow in our prayer life, may we grow in knowing your heart and knowing you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction



DAY TWO



PREPARING TO PRAY

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him,
“Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”*

Luke 11:1

A Place to Pray

Have you ever noticed in Luke 11:1 that Jesus was praying in a certain place? It almost goes without saying, obviously, you have to be somewhere. But let's not forget the power a place can have. A place can bring up memories, inspire warmth, or incite loneliness. It can get us in a certain frame of mind, just by being there. Scenery sets the mood.

It is certainly not necessary to have a set place to pray. God is of course the God of the entire universe. He is more than able to hear you wherever you are! And the power of prayer comes from Him, not a location.

However, it is wise and helpful to have a certain place to pray. And wherever that certain place is, it is most effective if it is a place of solitude. Our creator has not only given us access to Him, but He has invited us to commune with Him in private, with Him and Him alone, and then journey with Him throughout the day. What a priceless gift and privilege.

Do you already have a certain place to pray? Is there a well-worn path in your heart to that place? How readily or frequently do you go there? Do you remain? If you have never established a physical place to be your personal area for prayer, I would like to ask you to do so this week as part of your homework. Ask the Lord for His help choosing a location. Your place of prayer could be corner chair in your bedroom, living room, or spare room. It could be out on the back porch when weather permits. It may even be that closet that is just big enough for you to kneel in. It can be anywhere that allows you to be alone with the Lord and seek Him only. If you already have a place to pray, you may need to make a few adjustments. You will need a place where you can bow on your knees, as well as sit and write. (If getting down on your knees is difficult for you physically or your circumstances don't allow for it, you can find alternative positions for prayer in the Appendix.)

You might be wondering what you would need or find helpful in your place to pray. Here are a few suggestions:

- Privacy (as private as possible); if noise is a concern, use ear buds to play praise music without words or noise cancelling headphones

- Space on the floor; table and chair (preferable); sofa/chair; prayer mat and pillow
- Adequate light
- Blanket/comfy throw (for privacy or warmth)
- Bible
- Candle (optional)
- Pens/highlighters
- A place to record and journal your prayers

While we focus on the physical, we must be careful not to lose sight of the spiritual. As we prepare a physical place to pray, let us remember that God is our ultimate dwelling place. Note this theme as it runs through Psalm 91:

1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." 3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler... 9 Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—10 no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent... 14 "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. 15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." (vv. 1-4, 9-10, 14-16)

Ultimately, whatever place you might choose, God and His Word always remains, our place to pray. He and His Word are our foundation, light, and life.

The Time to Pray

As Robert Murray McCheyne once said, we should allow God's voice to be the first voice that we hear each morning. Prepare your heart, your schedule, and your mind to be with your Lord when you

arise. Make Him your first thought and your first place. May He receive the first fruits of your day. Prayerfully consider your options. Ask the Lord for His guidance. Identify the time or times of day you will meet with the Lord each week.

The Wisdom to Pray

The apostle Paul says, “*For we do not know what to pray for as we ought . . .*” (Rom. 8:26). Is there a solution to this problem? Yes! Paul had just said, “*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness*” (Rom. 8:26). We are to ask the Lord for His wisdom when we pray.

We can take as a model here the example of Solomon. In 1 Kings 3 it is recorded that the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and invited him to make a request of Him. Solomon was granted the opportunity to ask anything of God. When given this opportunity, Solomon asked for wisdom.

And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. 7 And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. 9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” (1 Kings 3:6-9)

We need to ask the Lord to give us an understanding mind to know how and what to pray. We need to ask Him to help us discern between good and evil. We need to ask Him to help us know what would be pleasing to Him. We need to pray according to His will and not our own.

The wonderful thing is that God delights to give wisdom when we ask Him! He says in James 1:5, “*If any of you lacks*

wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” Or consider these verses from the Psalms:

12 Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. 13 His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land. 14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. (Psa. 25:12-14)

Do we earnestly desire to learn how to pray? Let’s ask the Lord to give us His wisdom in prayer:

Lord, we are too timid and unbelieving to ask you in the way that we should for the things that we need. Often we don’t even know what to ask. We need wisdom to know how to pray. Lord, we ask that you would give us wisdom and an understanding mind and heart to know how to pray. Would you grant us the desire and the will to pray? Would you show us how to pray according to your will and not our own? Would you lead us in the path of prayer for your name’s sake? Would you grant us the wisdom needed to intercede on behalf of your body, the Church? We need your wisdom, your love, and your grace. O Lord, we need you. Please teach us to pray!

The Armor to Pray

It is one thing to learn how to pray; it is another thing to do it and it is yet another thing to do it with a humble, diligent, devoted heart in love, faith, and obedience. Once we set on the course to pray more fervently, we will experience spiritual resistance. So, during this week, take time to get ready. Make sure you put on all your armor. If you do decide that you want to step forward in our journey towards a deeper place in prayer, be prepared! The enemy does not like that, and he desires to stop you.

We can get so distracted in whatever we are doing that we easily forget to put on our spiritual armor. We leave it hanging in

the closet. Just like a little boy running out to play, we need our mother to remind us: “Come back in and put on your coat and hat and gloves! It’s cold out there!” It doesn’t feel so “cold” right when we run out the door, in a hurry to get going, but it isn’t long before we feel the bitter bite of the cold, fierce winter wind of spiritual warfare. Here is what Ephesians 6:10-20 says about this battle:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 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, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

If, for example, we let down the shield of faith, and Satan manages to lodge one of his flaming arrows of doubt, pride, or some other sin into us, our prayers will suffer—along with the rest of our spiritual life. But in this passage, prayer also aids us in our battle. It is one of the ways that we fight the spiritual battle that is going on around us. Like a soldier who tries to disarm his opponent in battle, the devil tries to keep us from prayer so that we will not be as effective in the fight.

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Just as we have asked the Lord to give us wisdom and an understanding mind to know how and what to pray, to help us know what would be pleasing to Him, and to pray according to His will and not our own, so we also want to ask Him to help us to actually engage in prayer. We need His help so badly, because our enemy wants to stop us from praying. We want to look to the Lord for His grace to help us:

Be fervent
Be faithful
Be compassionate
Be wise
Endure hardship
Suffer well
Be bold
Keep alert
Persevere
Stand firm
Never give up

The Words to Pray

If you find your prayers repetitive, or if you want to enrich your prayer life with Scripture, consider the wisdom found in Donald S. Whitney's book *Praying the Bible*. He encourages the reader to choose one or more psalms and meditate on every verse, using the details of the imagery as a catalyst for more personal, specific prayers. For example, if you are praying through Psalm 23, pray through verse 1 and then, "when nothing else comes to mind, you go to the next line: 'I shall not want.'" And perhaps you pray:

Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. . . But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills?"

No thought is too small or irrelevant. Feel free to share with the Lord whatever is on your heart. Whitney continues:

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After you've finished, you look at the next verse: "He makes me lie down in green pastures" (v. 2a). And, frankly, when you read the words "lie down," maybe what comes to mind is simply, "Lord, I would be grateful if you would make it possible for me to lie down and take a nap today."

By praying in this way, Whitney concludes, "you are. . . taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God." It is a beautiful, thoughtful way to praise our faithful and listening Shepherd.

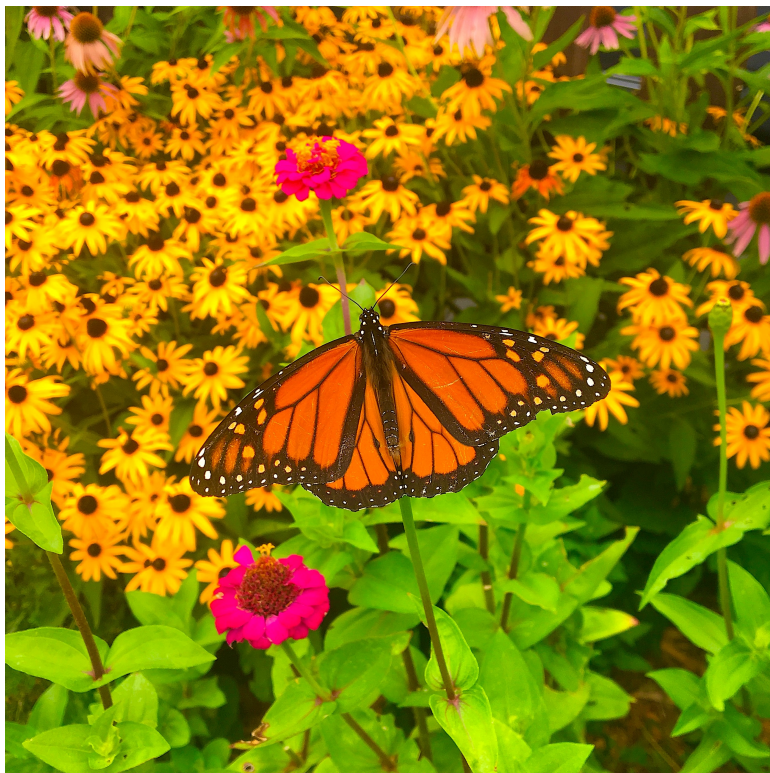
Let's pray:

Lord, pave the way to that certain place of prayer in my heart, in my mind, in my soul . . . strengthen me and my relationship with you in every way as your servant, as your friend, as your beloved. I want my prayer life with you to be forever transformed. I want a certain place of prayer. I want that certain place to be you. I want to want to be with you and in you always. May I humbly and reverently walk in the Spirit with you. May I live each day in communion with you, sharing my heart, my thoughts, my concerns. Help me keep in step with you according to your Word, worshiping and praying in Spirit and in truth in all I do and say.

Introduction



DAY THREE



PREPARING TO PRAY

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

A Heart to Pray

We are not just fighting against the devil. Satan is real all right, but one of our greatest battles is against our own sin-filled flesh. As we enter into prayer, we not only need to be prepared for spiritual warfare from *without*, but we need to be prepared for resistance from *within*—from our sinful natures. Perhaps the most dangerous kind of resistance that we face here is when our hearts become hard.

Our hearts are hardened when we listen to self, the flesh, the world, and/or the devil. We must be careful and not listen to the voice of a stranger. One of the scary things is that our hearts can become hardened without us even knowing it. Pain, bitterness, disobedience, willfulness, disillusionment, and selfishness (as well as many other things) can cause our hearts to grow hard before we have even realized it.

How do we examine whether our hearts are growing hard towards the Lord? Circumstances can be great tools to turn over the rocks in our heart and reveal what lies underneath. Relationships can do the same. How do you respond to difficult circumstances and broken or painful relationships? If we are consistently responding to these situations in bitterness and disobedience, we are in danger of a hard heart.

If you want to hear God's voice and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your heart. Seeds planted on rocky ground will never be able to put down roots, sprout, flourish, or produce any mature fruit. In the Old Testament, God warned the Israelites against a hardness of heart. Read, ponder, and pray through Psalm 95:6-9. Ask the Lord to help you take these verses to heart:

6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

Hardness of heart ignored and left unchecked has grave spiritual consequences. The opposite of a hard heart is a soft and responsive heart to the Lord—a believing, open, responsive, and obedient heart. This is the kind of heart that we want from the Lord. And the beautiful thing is, we can ask Him for it! God is sovereign over the human heart, and He is able to soften our hearts.

Let's pause for a moment and ask Him now. Humbly bow before the Lord and ask Him to search your heart. Ask Him to reveal any unconfessed sin, any hurt, bitterness, apathy, anger, disappointment, or even despair. Is there anyone you haven't forgiven that you need to forgive? Ask Him to grant you the grace you need to confess your sins and be ready to confess any sin He may reveal.

One of the best guides for personal confession is Psalm 51. David doesn't try to justify, deny, or blame, but he casts himself on the mercy of God. *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions"* (Psa. 51:1). Invite the Lord to soften your heart. Ask the Lord to give you ears to hear and a heart to respond. Let's pray together this prayer of repentance and cry for help:

Jesus, we need you!
Please help us.
Please meet us.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, we confess our sin.
Please forgive us.
Forgive our unbelief.
Forgive our laziness.
Forgive our hard hearts.
Forgive our selfishness.
We ask you to grant us repentance.

Now pray this prayer for yourself:
O Lord, have mercy on me. I am a sinner, I am weak, and I am prone to wander. I am impacted by the world around me, by my sin-filled flesh, and by my human thinking.

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I am easily deceived by my wicked heart and the devil's schemes. I need you. Please forgive my weak view of prayer, forgive my feeble prayer life, forgive my ingratitude for the blessing of prayer, forgive my hypocrisy, forgive my bitterness, forgive my divided heart, forgive my unbelief, forgive my selfish motives forgive my laziness, forgive my love of ease, forgive my lack of discipline. Lord, I need your mercy! I need your forgiveness! I need your love! I need your grace! O Lord, I need you!

When we look at our sin and hardness of heart, it can be easy to despair. But remember the Lord has given us a promise: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 Jn. 1:9). Remember and receive the forgiveness that Jesus died to provide. He loves you.

A Burdened Heart

Before you close your time with the Lord today lay your burdens before Him—everything that entraps, binds, perplexes, encumbers, or weighs you down. *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matt. 11:28-30).

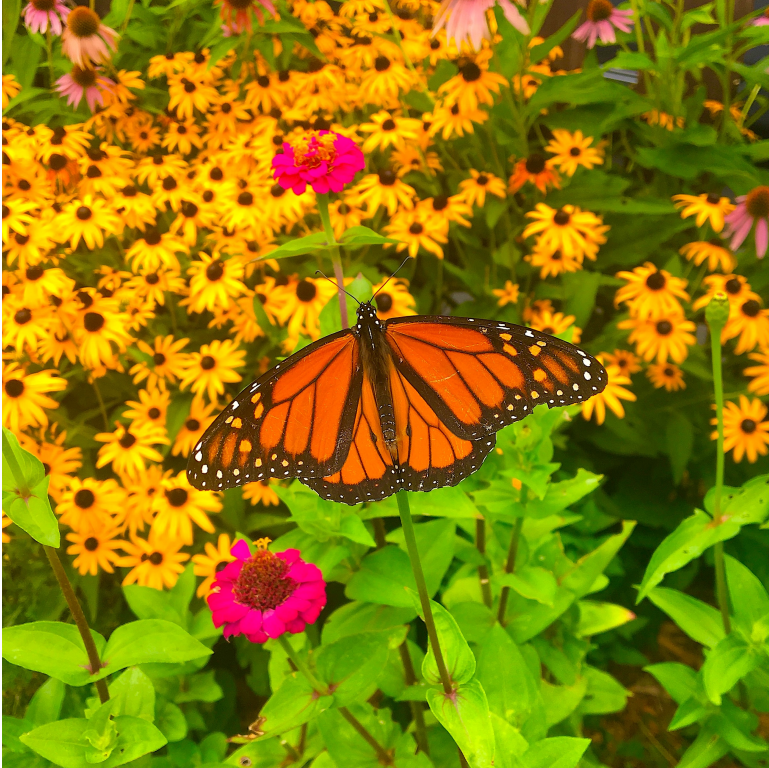
Lay before Him your grief, your fears, your worries, your dreams, your desires, your agendas, your disappointments, your heartaches and heartbreaks, your burdens, your insecurities, your religion, your rituals.

We want to lay everything openly before the Lord. Ask Him to remove any barriers, obstacles, or hindrances. This may take more than one sitting to do, but it is so important. Return to this throughout the week if necessary. The Lord, by His grace, will help us clear the ground, till the soil, and prepare our hearts that He would establish our relationship with Him. He wants to lead us on this journey to a deeper and more powerful place of prayer.

Introduction



DAY FOUR



PREPARING TO PRAY

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Matthew 6:7

The Relationship to Pray

There is one final thing we need to grasp and remember. Prayer is not a project and not just an item to do on your agenda. Prayer is about a person, the person of Jesus Christ. It is all too tempting to turn prayer into a *ritual* when it is supposed to be about a *relationship*. The Old Testament prophet Joel proclaimed, “*Rend your heart, and not your garments*” (Joel 2:13).

There are two big pitfalls to religious ritual. The first is that it is easy to do the outward ritual and ignore the inward reality that ritual was meant to express. Garment rending and other outward signs of religious emotion are actually easy to do but are also frequently hypocritical. True repentance is far more difficult and, consequently, far less common. It can be less painful to go without food (in the name of fasting) than to truly repent. It is much simpler to merely attend church than it is to truly worship. It is far easier to rend our garments than our hearts.

The second pitfall of religious ritual is that we are deceived into thinking that by doing it we can make ourselves right with God. Men will attend to the minutest ceremonial regulations—no matter how small or how numerous—because such things are actually pleasing to our flesh we feel like we have accomplished something and thereby made ourselves right with God. True religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of carnal men; they prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly.

This is especially dangerous as we embark on our journey of deeper prayer. Don’t be tempted to think that you are made right with God by completing this prayer study. Don’t be tempted to think that just by using the form of prayer recommended here you have more power before God or that He is more likely to listen to you. We don’t pray to gain God’s acceptance. We already have that in Christ. We pray because we so badly need to pray in order to grow.

A true and deep understanding of the love of Christ and His work on the cross and His presence in our hearts will help foster a true and deep relationship with the Lord. Let us ask the Lord to help us to lay aside the traditions of men, earthly concerns, and religious rites in order to rend our hearts in true, pure, and

holy worship. Tell the Lord that you desire a real relationship and not religion, ritual, or self-righteousness!

Known and Unknown Barriers

How is your relationship with the Lord? Ask the Lord to search your heart and help cultivate a heart that is ready to enter into intimate communion with Him and remain with Him. Unaware of the old things that lie hidden beneath the surface, we can harbor disappointment, anger, unbelief, bitterness, and resentment towards others, and towards God.

Draw near to the Lord and pour out your heart before Him. Share with Him as if He were physically sitting right in the room with you. Is there any hurt? Fear? Broken-heartedness? Disappointment? Apathy? Sense of failure? Need for control? Might there be things that He allowed to happen that made it seem as though He had forgotten you, didn't protect you, carelessly turned His back on you, or even betrayed you? Do you labor under the burden of a host of seemingly unanswered prayers? As we bring these things before the Lord, we are not blaming Him for our troubles or our sin. If we are going to be in an intimate and trusting relationship with Him, we don't want to have anything standing in the way. So, these thoughts and feelings must be addressed. We can give them to the Lord and ask Him for help.

Make time to share your heart with Him. Journal this process in your prayer journal. Pour out your heart and lay everything at His feet. Tell your loving Lord and Savior and Beloved everything. Don't be concerned that He will judge you.

Entrust each and every detail, situation, relationship, past hurt, or concern to Him. Confess any thoughts, feelings, words, or deeds that the Lord brings to mind.

When you are finished, leave it all with the Lord and thank Him. He is able to carry your burden. "Lord, help us run to you. Help us run into you, into your perfect love." The Bible says, *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe"* (Prov. 18:10). For those who have trusted in Jesus, He is safe. There is no safer place for us. May we see Him for who He truly is and trust Him with our all.

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He is our all in all. He is safe. He is our Savior, our Advocate, our Fortress, and Emmanuel.

S — Savior. Our Savior. Our Salvation. He is our righteousness. He has rescued us and continues to keep us.

A — Advocate. He is our advocate at all times. He for us and not against us. He pleads for us.

F — Fortress. He is our very strong tower, our protector. We are in Him and He is in us.

E — Emmanuel. God with us and in us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is our covenant Lord and partner.

Fix your eyes upon Him and focus on Him, not yourself, believing He loves you. May the Lord help us learn how to truly look to Him and commune with Him in prayer, overflowing into a life lived as one with Him. May we enter His presence and walk in the garden with Him day by day, moment by moment, to a deeper, more intimate, and powerful place of prayer. May this prayer be a blessing to all of us:

O Lord, Creator, and Sustainer of all, the heavens and the earth declare your glory! We humbly bow before you. You are God and we are not. We are yours and yours alone. You are Lord of all and have ordained each day for us from before the dawn of time. Each day belongs to you and each night as well. We want to live for you and die for you.

We have sinned against you in thought, in word, in attitude, and in deed. We have quenched the Holy Spirit, suppressed the promptings of our conscience, disobeyed the commands of your Word, and ignored the command to proclaim the gospel. But you are merciful and gracious, and we live under the loving provision of the precious hope granted to us in Christ. Help us see who you are, who we are, what you have done for us and will do. Deliver us from sinful and worldly thinking and unbelief, for we are now born anew and bound for glory. May we see you, flee sin, and pursue holiness. Let us never slumber or sleep.

I n t r o d u c t i o n

Keep us from fear. Warn us and remind us to put on our armor, and may we heed your warnings. Equip us and encourage us each day. We pray that we would keep our eyes fixed upon you and our minds upon your truth. Help us see each trial as a blessing, believing that they are allowed by you and have a purpose for good in our lives. Grant us grace to be filled with gratitude and praise as we remember your ways are higher than our ways and that we have been made for Another and another world.

Have mercy on us and grant us grace to follow your will in obedience. Help us to obey cheerfully, consistently, immediately, and completely. Align our hearts and minds according to your Word and your divine will. Let us never marginalize or disregard any aspect of your revealed will. May we exalt your Name and Word above all things at all times, regarding the doctrine and practice of the gospel, cherishing its commands, as well as its promises.

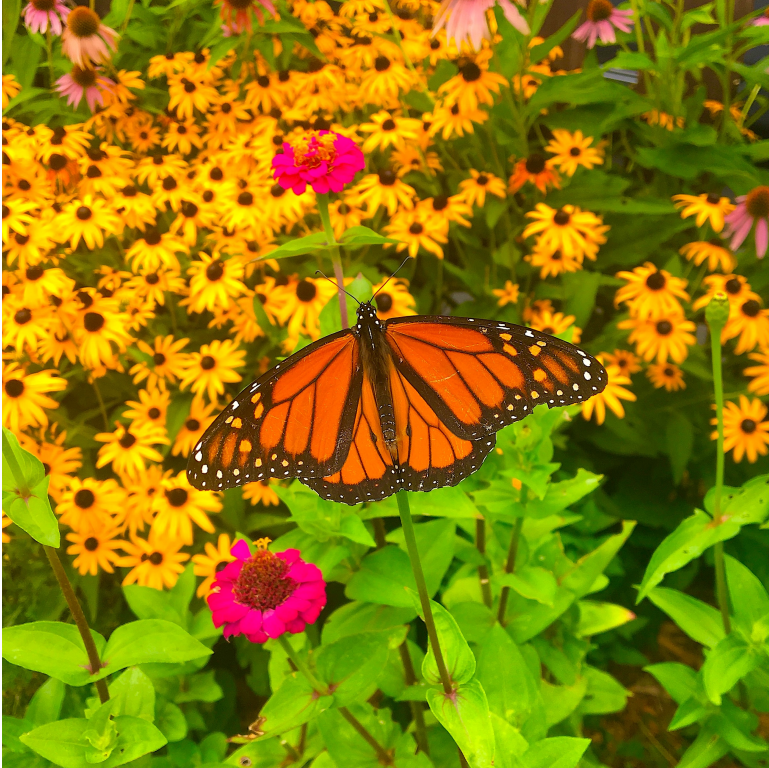
Prepare our hearts, Lord, for such a time as this. Make them pliable in your hands. Have thine own way in us. May we be a vessel of your glory, a blessing to you, and a blessing to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Introduction



DAY FIVE



PREPARING TO PRAY

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:11

Practice Session

Today, we will explain the daily and weekly prayer pattern in this study. We hope it will help to familiarize you with the structure. You might consider today as a practice session. So, while reading through each step, you can follow the instructions and participate from the heart as much as you are able in order to be prepared for digging in next week and so that you are able to enjoy entering into this time of prayer with the Lord.

Daily Pattern for Prayer Outline

Section One: THANKSGIVING and PRAISE

Draw Near with Faith

Enter His Gates

Into His Courts

Section Two: DAILY BIBLE READING

Listening to God

Taking the Truth to Heart

Section Three: AFFIRMING the GOSPEL

Taking the Gospel to Heart

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed (optional)

Section Four: CONFESSION AND THANKS

Before His Mercy Seat

The Two Greatest Commandments

The Ten Commandments and the Shema

Confession and Thanksgiving

Section Five: INTERCESSION

Living Stones

The Lord's Prayer

Personal Intercession

Intercession for Others



Section One: Thanksgiving and Praise

DRAW NEAR WITH FAITH

We want to draw near to the Lord in prayer to affirm our faith in God and His Word, for without faith we cannot please God. This time with Him is not a religious ritual or work of the flesh. The Lord has given us great freedom to come boldly into His presence.

Hebrews 10:19-23

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Each day we will enter into the Lord's presence with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise as the psalmist says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise" (Psa. 100:4). We will begin with thanksgiving in a section entitled, "Enter His Gates," and then move into praise in a section entitled, "Into His Courts." As we thank and praise Him, we will take our eyes off of the temporal, lift them up to our Lord, and humbly bow before Him in worship. May thanksgiving and praise become the foundation of our prayer life.

ENTER HIS GATES

"Enter His gates with thanksgiving . . ."

On Your Knees

Each day when you begin this section, you will be led to kneel and bow before the Lord as you offer specific thanks and praise. We

hope that you would see this outward posture as a representation of an inward posture of reverence and devotion as you descend to your knees and bow your head before your Lord, Master, God, Redeemer, and King. (If kneeling is difficult due to circumstances or health, you can find alternate postures of prayer in the Appendix.)

As indicated by Psalm 100, thanksgiving is an integral part of orienting our hearts in prayer with the Lord. As we draw near to Him in thanksgiving for who He is and what He has done for us,

- our hearts and minds are redirected,
- our heads are lifted above our enemies,
- our eyes are fixed upon Him,
- our hearts lean upon Him instead of our feelings,
- our thinking is grounded in truth, not our human perspective.

2 Corinthians 4:18

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

When we thank the Lord, we want to do it from a posture of humility and reverence, bowing our hearts and our souls to Him. True thankfulness places our total dependence on God, acknowledging that everything going on in our lives and all we have is the product of God's sovereign control, infinite wisdom, and gracious purposes. Therefore, when we give thanks in our circumstances...

(1) We are living by faith. Our trust is no longer placed in human wisdom but anchored in God's perfect wisdom and sovereign grace.

(2) The eternal and true comes into view. Our human, time-bound thinking is replaced by an eternal, holy perspective. Instead of seeing things from a human view, we see from God's view.

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(3) We direct our hearts and minds in the path of righteousness.

(4) Our hearts are shaped like our Savior's, we are more careful, faithful, and hopeful in our prayers and in the actions that follow.

(5) We guard our hearts against ungratefulness and grumbling.

(6) We honor God and bring to God a pleasing and acceptable offering.

I N T O H I S C O U R T S

"... and into His courts with praise."

Praise is different than thanks. When we praise the Lord, we affirm and proclaim *who* He is, His attributes, and His character. Praise is worshiping the Lord for these things. For example, we might meditate on God's eternal nature and praise Him because He is from everlasting to everlasting. Or we might contemplate His love and goodness and praise Him for such kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. God is worthy to be praised because He is so great and so good and so wonderful! Praise is the overflow of a heart that deeply understands these things about God.

Psalm 86:8-10

*8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.*

*9 All the nations you have made shall come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.*

*10 For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.*

One way to praise God is to use the names and titles of God. We have listed a few on the following page.

Introduction

Yahweh
Creator of Heaven and Earth
The Great I AM
God Most High
God Almighty
The God Who Sees
The God Who Provides
The God Who Protects
Lord of All

After praying through the thanksgiving and praise passages each day, you will be prompted to be seated and then write a brief summary of your thanks and praise in your personal prayer journal. When you are finished, continue to Section Two.



Section Two: Daily Bible Reading **LISTENING TO GOD**

As we enter further into prayer, we want to be quick to listen and slow to speak. In preparing to bring our requests before our God and King, it's important for us to listen to Him first. So, we will take time to read and meditate on the Scriptures so that our hearts and minds are centered within the context of His Word. Theologian Robert Murray McCheyne said:

Those believers will stand firmest who have no dependence upon self or upon creatures, but upon Jehovah our Righteousness. We must be driven more to our Bibles, and to the mercy-seat, if we are to stand in the evil day. Then we shall be able to say, like David—"The proud have had me greatly in derision, yet have I not declined from Thy law." "Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of Thy word." . . . Above all, use the Word as a lamp to your feet and a light to your path—your guide in perplexity—your

armor in temptation—your food in times of faintness. Hear the constant cry of the great Intercessor, ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.’”⁶

Each day, in this section, you will be provided with a passage of Scripture to read. If you have a daily Bible reading plan that you are already using, it would be at this point that you would read your assigned portion. (We have provided a year-long Bible reading plan in the Appendix that you may use after the conclusion of this first cycle of the study. We recommend it to you as one that has been prayerfully compiled). Allow the Lord to speak to your heart and to focus your mind on Him and His Word and on His wisdom and truth.

You will be asked to write one truth from your reading in your personal prayer journal. This can be brief and is simply a way to grasp hold of a truth the Lord revealed to you in His Word.



Section Three: Affirming the Gospel **TAKING THE GOSPEL TO HEART**

The purpose of this section is to take the gospel to heart and remember daily the grace and mercy of the gospel. The idea behind this is similar to that of meditating on or memorizing Scripture, only it is focused specifically on the gospel, as we slowly and carefully contemplate the words of the Scripture passage and focus in on the specific gospel truth it is teaching us. In this section, we will also be offered the option of reading the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed once or twice a week. This is not intended to be a rote, religious ritual, but a time to remind us of our God, who He is, and what He has done for us.

⁶ Andrew A. Bonar, *The Works of Robert Murray McCheyne* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1874), 345-348.

The Gospel

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The Apostles' Creed (optional)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.



Section Four: Confession

B E F O R E H I S M E R C Y S E A T

Let us approach confession with fresh faith and hope. We don't have to avoid the truth, be afraid to confess our sin, or dread asking God to search our hearts because God has provided for us extravagantly in Christ. Why should we be burdened and blinded by our sin when we have a Savior who has offered willingly to take our sin upon himself? He loves us. He knows our frame. In this section we will be led to draw near to His mercy seat where Christ, our suffering servant, purchased us a full cleansing by His blood.

Isaiah 53:4-5

3 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But

he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

He was crucified in our place. The heart of the gospel is that Christ makes us right with God by taking all of our wrongs upon himself. And He does so, not because we deserve it, but because God determined to make a way where there seemed to be no way. The human idea that God rewards good people and punishes bad people is turned upside down and inside out. The truth of the gospel is “*that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:8). He takes our sin upon himself. The just for the unjust. “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor. 5:21).

We can put all of our sin on Him. We cannot carry this burden because we will be crushed. Christ is our scapegoat! He has taken all of our sin upon himself! Draw near to God by faith in Christ. “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (Heb. 4:16).

Each day we will come before the mercy seat by faith, with no fear of condemnation, but with a sincere desire to watch over our hearts with all diligence. To do this, we will use the content and instruction contained in The Two Greatest Commandments (Matt. 22:37-40), The Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:1-21), and The Shema (Deut. 6:1-9). These will all be read the first day of each month-long prayer cycle. On each day thereafter, we will focus on one specific commandment. We will confess to the Lord the specific sins revealed to us in His Word as we pray through these passages and allow the truth of His Word to penetrate our hearts.

Consider the provision God has made for us in confession. Our God has provided us a place that we can go. He has provided His mercy seat where all our sin was laid upon our scapegoat, the lamb of God our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 16:20-22

And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall

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present the live goat. 21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

Confession and Thanksgiving

Ask the Lord to search your heart for any of the following. Confess any of these sins that you might have fallen prey to and any others that might not be on this list:

Fear
Worry
Materialism
Self-doubt
Anger, Bitterness
Self-centeredness
Accomplishing things by your own effort
Fear of man
Covetousness
Control
Anxiety
Resentment
Laziness
Gossip, Slander
Procrastination
Stealing
Lying or adjusting the truth
Pornography
Overeating or Undereating
Excessive shopping
Adultery or adulterous thoughts
Disobedience
Pride
Unbelief

Under “Confess” each day, we will be asked to reflect on what the Lord has revealed to us. We will then be asked to prayerfully write our confession in our personal prayer journal. Each day as we confess our sin, we must choose to believe that He is righteous, that He alone can forgive our sin. We want to put our trust in Him and what He has done. Our Father has done what we could not do for ourselves, and He gives us grace to repent of our sin. We will be prompted to fix our eyes on Jesus and trust in His grace to turn from our sins and walk forward in righteousness. As we close the section, we will also thank Him for His mercy and forgiveness, for listening to, for answering our prayers, and for His promise to never leave or forsake us.



Section Five: Intercession L I V I N G S T O N E S

The Lord's Prayer

This week, we will begin this section of intercession by praying through the Lord's prayer. As an alternative and for more study, the Appendix offers a guide to praying through specific parts of the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6:9-13

9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

*10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

*12 and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

As living stones, we are the body of Christ. We are His people, His ambassadors, His holy priesthood:

1 Peter 2:4-5

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In this section we will be prompted to write requests for ourselves in the personal prayer journal and prayers for others in the companion prayer binder under specific tabs. We will be guided step by step in this process throughout the study. The following entry in Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* is an encouragement concerning intercessory prayer:

Be encouraged to cheerfully offer intercessory prayer, by remembering that such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears. The prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense that our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer, there is not a single grain for Himself. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications—and the more our prayer like Christ's, the sweeter it will be.

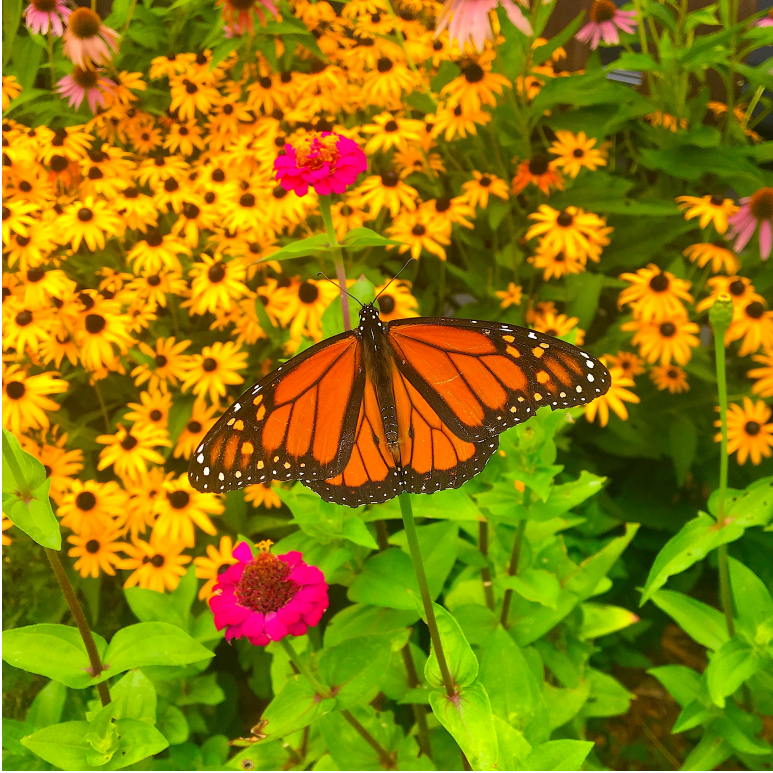
Thus while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit—more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness—will be, through the precious merits of Jesus, the sweetest sacrifice that we can offer to God. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent [powerful]. What wonders it has accomplished! The Word of God teems with its marvelous deeds.

Believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand; use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and you will surely be a blessing to others.⁷

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, February 6, evening entry.



D A Y S I X



Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

John 14:12-14



Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life

R E F L E C T I O N

Worship

As you begin today, ask the Lord to tune your heart to sing His praise and sing this hymn from the depths of your heart. After spending time in worship, review Week 1 using the Personal Reflection below, and thank the Lord for the ways He has revealed Himself to you this week.

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing⁸

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Sorrowing I shall be in spirit,
Till released from flesh and sin,
Yet from what I do inherit,
Here Thy praises I'll begin;

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
Here by Thy great help I've come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;

⁸ Words by Robert Robinson, 1758.

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He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood;

How His kindness yet pursues me
Mortal tongue can never tell,
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me
I cannot proclaim it well.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

O that day when freed from sinning,
I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen
How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace;

Come, my Lord, no longer tarry,
Take my ransomed soul away;
Send thine angels now to carry
Me to realms of endless praise.

Personal Review

Reflect upon your communion with the Lord during this past week.
Review your personal prayer journal pages from the past week.
How did the Lord give you wisdom, grace, repentance, or
encouragement this week?

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S T E P O N E

Taking The Truth To Heart

Review the truths you noted in your personal prayer journal. Choose one Scripture from the week that the Lord is using to renew your mind and transform your heart and write it out. (Rom. 12:2)

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, or train you? (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

S T E P T W O

Putting The Flesh To Death

What sin (wrong thinking or ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) are you convicted of due to the Scripture you wrote? Confess this in writing. Also include an example of where you saw the evidence of this sin in your life this week. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness and receive His mercy and grace. (1 Jn. 1:9-10)

What do you need to "put off" in your thinking, beliefs, attitude, or behavior in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart? (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9)

I n t r o d u c t i o n

S T E P T H R E E

Bringing The Truth To Life

Walking forward in repentance and faith by God's grace, what will you "put on"? How are you going to do this? Be specific in your plan of action and find encouragement by what the Lord is going to do. (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10, 12, 14)

Remember God's love in the gospel, that you have died and Christ now lives in you. Walk in love. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verse.



Taking the Truth to Heart Chart

| Name | Step One: <i>Taking the Truth to Heart</i> | Step Two: <i>Putting the Flesh to Death</i> | Step Three: <i>Bringing the Truth to Life</i> |
|------|---|--|--|
| | SCRIPTURE | SIN | ACTION |
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