

# Rediscovering Prayer

A Day-by-Day Prayer and Devotional Guide

LifePath Church

*Excerpts in this Day-by-Day prayer guide are taken from Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home by Richard Foster. We strongly encourage you to purchase this book as a companion to this study. It is a treasure trove filled with thought-provoking insights about the many ways to pray.*

## Week One — Simple Prayer

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.” Ps. 5:3*

#### Read the Excerpt

Our problem is that we assume prayer is something to master the way we master algebra or auto mechanics. That puts us in the “on-top” position, where we are competent and in control. But when praying, we come “underneath,” where we calmly and deliberately surrender control and become incompetent. “To pray:” writes Emilie Griffin, “means to be willing to be naive.”

#### Question to Consider

What can you do to counter the feeling that you must be competent in prayer and embrace naiveté? Might this be a good time to give yourself permission to rediscover simple prayer, to come at the idea of praying with fresh and unaffected eyes? (*NOTE: Sometimes we assign a negative connotation to the word “naiveté.” A good definition of what it means to be naive is this: “having or showing unaffected simplicity of nature or absence of artificiality; unsophisticated.”*)

#### Prayer Practice

Address God in Simple Prayer and talk about whatever is on your mind. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.” Ps. 18:30-32*

#### Read the Excerpt

The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives—altruistic *and* selfish, merciful *and* hateful, loving *and* bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will *never* unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with faith, or

anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.

### **Question to Consider**

What are you FEELING at this point in your day? Do you feel comfortable coming before God with honest expression of that feeling?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and express to Him what kind of day you've been having. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Ps 25:4-5*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Simple Prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father. There is no pretense in Simple Prayer. We do not pretend to be more holy, more pure, or more saintly than we actually are. We do not try to conceal our conflicting and contradictory motives from God—or ourselves. And in this posture we pour out our heart to the God who is greater than our heart and who knows all things (1 John 3:20).

### **Question to Consider**

Is it uncomfortable for you to "look bad" in front of God when you are praying? To sound whiny? To express anger? To admit to doubt? To admit to laziness or apathy? To appear selfish?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and express something you are experiencing that doesn't sound terribly "saintly." Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.” Ps. 36:7-9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

There is a temptation, especially by the “sophisticated,” to despise this most elementary way of praying. They seek to skip over Simple Prayer in the hopes of advancing to more “mature” expressions of prayer. They smile at the egotistical asking, asking, asking of so many. Grandly they speak of avoiding “self-centered prayer” in favor of “other-centered prayer” What these people fail to see, however, is that Simple Prayer is necessary, even essential, to the spiritual life. The only way we move beyond “self-centered prayer” (if indeed we ever do) is by going through it, not by making a detour around it.

### **Question to Consider**

Does this idea of moving through simple prayer, rather than detouring around it, give you a new perspective on prayers that sound immature to your ears?

Will you try this imaginative exercise? Take a moment to imagine a path through the woods. The path dips down ahead of you, and the next few yards are really muddy. Imagine yourself taking those awkward step-leaps that aim for the driest patches you can find on which to land, but which you know are sure to get your shoes a little dirty even as they propel you forward. Imagine yourself hopping onto solid ground at the far end of the muddy patch — don’t you feel good about having gone through and made it to the next stretch of the path? And what’s the big deal about a little mud on your shoes? You came on this walk to enjoy the great outdoors!

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and express a few thoughts or feelings that sound like step-leaps through a muddy patch of frustration, or selfishness, or resentment, but keep in mind that you are not going to be stuck here in your prayer forever. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me! Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.” Ps. 25:16-20*

### **Read the Excerpt**

In the most natural and simple way possible we learn to pray our experiences by taking up the ordinary events of everyday life and giving them to God. Perhaps we have crushing failure that gives us more than one sleepless night. Well, we pace the floor *with* God, telling him of our hurt and our pain and our disappointment. “Why me?” we cry out, “why me?” for frustration and tears and anger are also the language of Simple Prayer. We invite God to walk with us as we grieve the loss of our dream. Maybe an offhand remark by a neighbor triggers a whole explosion of emotions within us: anger, jealousy, fear. Very well, we speak frankly and honestly with God about what is happening and ask him to help us see the hurt behind the emotion.

### **Question to Consider**

Is this kind of prayer something that has been a part of your prayer practice before now? What resistance to this idea of crying out with honest pain or anger comes to mind as you consider praying this way?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and express whatever is on your heart without trying to clean it up. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you.” Ps. 38:9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

We must never believe the lie that says that the details of our lives are not the proper content of prayer. For example, we may have been taught that prayer is a sublime and otherworldly activity, that in prayer we are to talk to God *about* God. As a result, we are inclined to view our experiences as distractions and intrusions into proper prayer. This is an ethereal, decarnate spirituality. We, on the other hand, worship a God who was born in a smelly stable, who walked this earth in blood, sweat, and tears, but who nevertheless lived in perpetual responsiveness to the heavenly Monitor.

### **Question to Consider**

What human experiences of Jesus are a comfort to you as you approach the God who truly knows that it's like to be a human?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and briefly begin by expressing your gratitude for his willingness to live as a man. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.” Ps. 62:5*

### **Read the Excerpt**

For now, do not worry about “proper” praying, just talk to God. Share your hurts, share your sorrows, share your joys—freely and openly. God listens in compassion and love, just like we do when our children come to us. He delights in our presence. When we do this, we will discover something of inestimable value. We will discover that by praying we learn to pray.

### **Question to Consider**

Remember for a moment the way you feel when someone you love dearly sits down on your sofa and wants to share their heart with you. Can you imagine God feels the same way when you want to sit with Him and talk?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and briefly begin by expressing gratitude for the delight He takes in our desire to be with him. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving.” Ps. 62:11*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Prayer is nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is especially true with Simple Prayer. Here no one has any advantage. The bruised and broken enter Simple Prayer as freely as do the healthy and wealthy. Madame Guyon

writes, “This way of prayer, this simple relationship to your Lord, is so suited for everyone; it is just as suited for the dull and the ignorant as it is for the well-educated. This prayer, this experience which begins so simply, has as its end a totally abandoned love to the Lord. Only one thing is required—*Love*.”

### **Question to Consider**

Have you sometimes felt a sense of ineptitude when you try to pray, a need to be smarter, or holier, or something-er in order to pray well?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer and begin by briefly expressing gratitude for the level playing field He gives us in prayer, the unqualified welcome he offers. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.” Ps. 131:1-2*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Finally, I would suggest that in the beginning it is wise to strive for uneventful prayer experiences. Divine revelations and ecstasies can overwhelm us and distract us from the real work of prayer. Our approach needs to be more like that of the Psalmist, who sought to avoid “marvels beyond my scope. Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother’s arms” (Ps. 131:1-2, JB). Besides, if we are unaccustomed to it, just slipping quietly into the presence of God can be so exotic and fresh that it delights us enormously.

### **Question to Consider**

Can you imagine other delights than can be most profound in their simplicity? Remember the simple beauty of a sunset, a wordless hug from a friend, a sniff of something yummy, the cool of a breeze on a hot summer day.

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer expressing a desire for the simple joy of time in his presence. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Day Five: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me. Be my rock of refuge to which I can always go.” Ps. 71:1-3*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Simple Prayer is often ignored in many of the books written about prayer. I have often wondered why this is so. Perhaps it is because devout writers fear the self-centered aspects of Simple Prayer. To focus so much on the “self” can easily lead to selfishness and narcissism. Further, we are always in danger of rationalizing and manipulating our experiences so that we hear only what we want to hear. We may in the end become so consumed with ourselves that we lose sight of God altogether and end up worshipping “the creature rather than the Creator,” as Paul put it (Rom. 1:25). It is a legitimate concern. The dangers are all too real. But as Joseph Schmidt notes, “They are dangers on the right road. We must move with some caution but not turn back.” Nor shall we turn back. Seeking divine protection, we venture forward with honesty and openness.

### **Question to Consider**

Can you think of other areas of your life where you must balance legitimate caution with relentless forward movement?

### **Prayer Practice**

Address God in Simple Prayer, first acknowledging that you recognize a risk of self-centeredness, but that you want genuine time in his presence because you know that he has created you to need it. Honestly speak your thoughts, your fears, your joys, your anger. Speak to him in conversational language as you would address a dear friend.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Week Two — Prayer of the Forsaken

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” Ps. 10:1*

#### Read the Excerpt

The old writers spoke of this reality as Deus Absconditus—the God who is hidden. Almost instinctively you understand the experience they were describing, do you not? Have you ever tried to pray and felt nothing, saw nothing, sensed nothing? Has it ever seemed like your prayers did no more than bounce off the ceiling and ricochet around an empty room? Have there been times when you desperately needed some word of assurance, some demonstration of divine presence, and you got nothing? Sometimes it just seems like God is hidden from us. We do everything we know. We pray. We serve. We worship. We live as faithfully as we can. And still there is nothing... nothing! It feels like we are “beating on Heaven’s door with bruised knuckles in the dark” to use the words of George Buttrick.

#### Question to Consider

Have you ever felt that God was hidden as you tried to pray?

#### Prayer Practice

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall.” Ps. 13:1-4*

#### Read the Excerpt

Christians down through the centuries have witnessed the same experience. Saint John of the Cross named it “the dark night of the soul.” An anonymous English writer identified it as “the cloud of unknowing.” Jean-Pierre de Caussade called it “the dark night of faith.” George Fox said simply,

“When it was day I wished for night, and when it was night I wished for day.” Be encouraged—you and I are in good company. In addition, I want you to know that to be faced with the “withering winds of God’s hiddenness” does not mean that God is displeased with you, or that you are insensitive to the work of God’s Spirit, or that you have committed some horrendous offense against heaven, or that there is something wrong with you, or anything. Darkness is a definite experience of prayer. It is to be expected, even embraced.

### **Question to Consider**

Have you ever thought that God was silent or seemed absent because he was displeased with you, that there was something so wrong with you that God could not bear to listen to your prayers?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“To you I call, O Lord my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit. Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.” Ps. 28:1-2*

### **Read the Excerpt**

It is true that those in the first flush of faith often are given unusual graces of the Spirit, just like a new baby is cuddled and pampered. It is also true that some of the deepest experiences of alienation and separation from God have come to those who have traveled far into the interior realms of faith. But we can enter the bleak deserts of barrenness and the dark canyons of anguish at any number of points in our sojourn.

### **Question to Consider**

Does looking back to precious moments of past answered prayers feel encouraging or frustrating...or a mix of both?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Day Two: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### From the Psalms

*“I have become like broken pottery. For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.” Ps. 31:12-15*

### Read the Excerpt

Can you see how our very sense of the absence of God is, therefore, an unsuspected grace? In the very act of hiddenness God is slowly weaning us of fashioning him in our own image. Like Aslan, the Christ figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, God is wild and free and comes at will. By refusing to be a puppet on our string or a genie in our bottle, God frees us from our false, idolatrous images.

### Question to Consider

Can you ever remember a time when you felt like God was silent or absent, but you dug down deep and found that you were able to say, like David in the psalm above, that you were choosing to trust him anyway? Can you choose to do that today?

### Prayer Practice

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Day Three: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### From the Psalms

*“O Lord, you have seen this; be not silent. Do not be far from me, O Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense! Contend for me, my God and Lord. Vindicate me in your righteousness, O Lord my God.” Ps. 35:22-24*

### Read the Excerpt

Have you ever been there? Perhaps for you it was the tragic death of child or spouse that plunged you into the desolate desert of God's absence. Maybe it was a crisis in marriage or vocation, or a failure in business. It may have been none of these. There may have been no dramatic event at all—you simply slipped from the warm glow of intimate communion to the icy cold of... nothing. At least “nothing” is how it feels... well, actually there is no feeling at all. It is as if all feelings have gone into hibernation. (You see how I am struggling for the language to describe this experience of abandonment, for words are fragmentary approximations at best, but if you have been there, you understand what I mean.)

**Question to Consider**

Have you ever been there? If not, can you imagine a situation where you think you likely would feel that kind of nothingness?

**Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

**Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

**From the Psalms**

*"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet upon a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." Ps. 40:1-3*

**Read the Excerpt**

Through all of this, paradoxically, God is purifying our faith by threatening to destroy it. We are led to a profound and holy distrust of all superficial drives and human strivings. We know more deeply than ever before our capacity for infinite self-deception. Slowly we are being taken off of vain securities and false allegiances. Our trust in all exterior and interior results is being shattered so that we can learn faith in God alone. Through our barrenness of soul God is producing detachment, humility, patience, perseverance.

**Question to Consider**

Can you think of a time when you have "grown out of" an area of self-deception about God, where you left behind an immature assumption and were the better for it, even though the growing process was difficult?

**Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

**Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“I say to God, my rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?’” Ps. 42:9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

The best way I know to relearn this time-honored approach to God is by praying that part of the Psalter traditionally known as the “Lament Psalms.” The ancient singers really knew how to complain, and their words of anguish and frustration can guide our lips into the prayer we dare not pray alone. They expressed reverence and disappointment: “God whom I praise, break your silence” (Ps. 109:1, JB). They experienced dogged hope and mounting despair: “I am here, calling for your help, praying to you every morning: why do you reject me? Why do you hide your face from me?” (Ps. 88:13-14, JB). They had confidence in the character of God and exasperation at the inaction of God: “I say to God, my rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’” (Ps. 42:9).

### **Question to Consider**

Have you cried out to God in pain, using the words of the Psalms as your prayers...perhaps when coming up with your own words was just too difficult?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Try praying one of the Lament Psalms in part or in its entirety, and use the words of scripture to honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you...” Ps. 42:5*

### **Read the Excerpt**

The Lament Psalms teach us to pray our inner conflicts and contradictions. They allow us to shout out our forsakenness in the dark caverns of abandonment and then hear the echo return to us over and over until we bitterly recant of them, only to shout them out again. They give us permission to shake our fist at God one moment and break into doxology the next.

### **Question to Consider**

Does it make you uncomfortable when you find your feelings and beliefs all jumbled together, a mix of despair and faith? Can you give yourself permission to be messy in your soul but still come to meet with God in prayer?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“When I am afraid I will trust in you. In God whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?...Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll — are they not in your record?...I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you.” Ps. 56:3-4, 8, 12*

### **Read the Excerpt**

A second thing we can do when we are buffeted by the silence of God is to beat upon the cloud of unknowing “with a short dart of longing love.” We may not see the end from the beginning, but we keep on doing what we know to do. We pray, we listen, we worship, we carry out the duty of the present moment. What we learned to do in the light of God’s love, we also do in the dark of God’s absence. We ask and continue to ask even though there is no answer. We seek and continue to seek even though we do not find. We knock and continue to knock even though the door remains shut. It is this constant, longing love that produces a firmness of life orientation in us. We love God more than the gifts God brings. Like Job, we serve God even if he slays us. Like Mary, we say freely, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). This is a wonderful grace.

### **Question to Consider**

Can you think of someone you have watched exercise this kind of perseverance during a period of tremendous testing of their faith?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me — a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock; “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I grieve about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?” Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” Ps. 42:7-11*

### **Read the Excerpt**

I do not fully understand the reasons for the wildernesses of God’s absence. This I do know: while the wilderness is necessary, it is never meant to be permanent. In God’s time and in God’s way the desert will give way to a land flowing with milk and honey. And as we wait for that promised land of the soul, we can echo the prayer of Bernard of Clairvaux, “O my God, deep calls unto deep” (Ps. 42:7). The deep of my profound misery calls to the deep of Your infinite mercy.

### **Question to Consider**

Does it make sense to imagine that discovering a new depth in your own soul during a time of calling out in lament to the deep love of God might be just what you need to mature as a disciple of Jesus?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray your lament to God in the wilderness of your soul; whatever has broken your heart deserves space in your prayers. If you need to, shout about your forsakenness and shake your fist at God. Pray one of the Lament Psalms if it helps, or just honestly proclaim your brokenness to God.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Week Three — Prayer of Examen

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### **From the Psalms**

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps. 139:23-24*

#### **Read the Excerpt**

The Psalmist declares, “Yahweh, you examine me and know me” (Ps. 139:1, JB). King David—who ought to know—witnesses, “The LORD searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought” (1 Chron. 28:9). And the Apostle Paul reminds us that “the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). And on it goes. These folk of faith knew the examen of God, and they experienced it not as a dreadful thing but as something of immeasurable strength and empowerment. So what is this Prayer of Examen? It has two basic aspects, like the two sides of a door. The first is an examen of consciousness through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence. The second aspect is an examen of conscience in which we uncover those areas that need cleansing, purifying, and healing.

#### **Question to Consider**

Does the idea that God examines us deeply feel like a dreadful thing to you, or something of empowerment?

#### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### **From the Psalms**

*“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.” Ps. 139:1-4*

### **Read the Excerpt**

In the examen of consciousness we prayerfully reflect on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of our days to see how God has been at work among us and how we responded. We consider, for example, whether the boisterous neighbor of last night was more than just a rude interruption of a quiet evening. Maybe, just maybe, he was the voice of God urging us to be attentive to the pain and loneliness of those around us. Perhaps in the glorious sunrise of this morning God was shouting out to us his love of beauty and inviting us to share in it, but we were too sleepy or distracted to participate. Maybe we responded to the Divine Whisper to write a letter or call a friend on the telephone, and the results of our simple obedience were nothing short of startling.

### **Question to Consider**

Do you think you might uncover greater purpose in the efforts of your busy days if you took a moment to practice the examen of consciousness on a regular basis?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the prayer two-part of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.” Ps. 107:28-32*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Actually, the examen of consciousness is one way we heed the call to rehearse the mighty deeds of God. Have you ever noticed how frequently the Bible urges us to remember? Remember the covenant God made with Abraham. Remember how Yahweh delivered his people from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Remember the holy Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Remember the kingdom promise to David. Remember the heir of David, whose body was broken and whose blood was poured out. In the bread and the wine remember...remember Calvary.

### **Question to Consider**

Is purposefully choosing to remember the times God has shown his love and provision in powerful ways a practice you have noticed before? In the scripture? In the words of people you respect? In your own life?

**Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

**Day Two: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

**From the Psalms**

*“If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness.” Ps. 130:3-4*

**Read the Excerpt**

In the examen of conscience we are inviting the Lord to search our hearts to the depths. Far from being dreadful, this is a scrutiny of love. We boldly speak the words of the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24). Without apology and without defense we ask to see what is truly in us. It is for our own sake that we ask these things. It is for our good, for our healing, for our happiness.

**Question to Consider**

Can you think of a time when you were profoundly relieved to be faced with a failing or weakness in yourself, finding that you were now freed up to make things right...even if it was uncomfortable?

**Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

**Day Three: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps toward your statutes." Ps. 119:57-59*

### **Read the Excerpt**

The Prayer of Examen produces within us the priceless grace of self-knowledge. I wish I could adequately explain to you how great a grace this truly is. Unfortunately, contemporary men and women simply do not value self-knowledge in the same way that all preceding generations have. For us technocratic knowledge reigns supreme. Even when we pursue self-knowledge, we all too often reduce it to a hedonistic search for personal peace and prosperity. How poor we are! Even the pagan philosophers were wiser than this generation. They knew that an unexamined life was not worth living. "Know thyself" is the famous dictum of Socrates.

### **Question to Consider**

Do you wish you understood yourself better, your motives and your fears, the wounds for which you need healing and the dreams you hold in the deepest parts of your heart...your purpose in life?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts." Ps. 119:102-104*

### **Read the Excerpt**

We must not deny or ignore the depth of our evil, for, paradoxically, our sinfulness becomes our bread. When in honesty we accept the evil that is in us as part of the truth about ourselves and offer that truth up to God, we are in a mysterious way nourished. Even the truth about our shadow side sets us free (John 8:32).

### **Question to Consider**

Can you believe that God's desire is for us to be set free and filled up by this process of examen, and not to be imprisoned by shame?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.” Ps. 119:124-125*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Through faith, self-knowledge leads us to a self-acceptance and self-love that draw their life from God's acceptance and love. So Saint Teresa is right after all; this is “the bread with which all palates must be fed” Her words are wise counsel indeed: “This path of self knowledge must never be abandoned.”

### **Question to Consider**

Can you look at God's decrees and statutes through a new lens, opening yourself up to be examined and set free by a right understanding of yourself in relationship to a holy God who defines himself by love?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, O Lord, according to your laws... You are near, O Lord, and all your commands are true. Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.” Ps. 119:149, 151-152*

### **Read the Excerpt**

With examen more than any other form of prayer, we bore down deeper and deeper, the way a drill would bore down into the bowels of the earth. We are constantly turning inward—but inward in a very special way. I do not mean to turn inward by becoming ever more introspective, nor do I mean to turn inward in hopes of finding within ourselves some special inner strength or an inner savior who will deliver us. Vain search! No, it is not a journey into ourselves that we are undertaking but a journey through ourselves so that we can emerge from the deepest level of the self into God. As Saint John Chrysostom notes, “Find the door of your heart, you will discover it is the door of the kingdom of God.”

### **Question to Consider**

When you ask God to enable you to journey deep into yourself, do you find his fingerprints on your life become visible?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. . . . As for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.”*  
*Ps. 73:21-24, 28*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Journal keeping is a highly intentional reflection on the events of our days. It differs from a diary by its focus on why and wherefore rather than who and what. The external events are springboards for understanding the deeper workings of God in the heart. One special value of a journal is the record that it keeps—a personal Ebenezer, if you will. We can turn back to the pages of our personal history with God as often as we like and see the issues we have struggled with and the progress we have made.

### **Question to Consider**

Has journaling been a helpful tool to you in the past, or does it feel like a school assignment?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” Ps. 139:7-10*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Many other things can be done. One summer I went outside each evening at about 10:00 P.M. to the little basketball court we had set up in our driveway. Alone, I would shoot baskets, all the time inviting God to do a spiritual inventory on the day. Many things would surface to memory. Sin was there to be sure: an angry word, a missed courtesy, a failed opportunity to encourage someone. But there was also the good: a small obedience, a quiet prayer that seemed to do so much, a word fitly spoken. It was for one summer only, and I have never tried to repeat the experience, but it was one way of experiencing the examen of consciousness.

### **Question to Consider**

Is there an activity or habit that you could connect to your prayer of examen, weaving this type of prayer into a variety of settings in your daily life?

### **Prayer Practice**

Pray the two-part prayer of examen by thinking back through your day. Pray the examen of consciousness by reflecting on the thoughts, feelings and actions of your day. Pray the examen of conscience by inviting God to search the depths of your heart for what is truly in you, opening the door to healing and reconciliation.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Week Four — Prayer of Adoration

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.” Ps. 135:3*

#### Read the Excerpt

In one sense adoration is not a special form of prayer, for all true prayer is saturated with it. It is the air in which prayer breathes, the sea in which prayer swims. In another sense, though, it *is* distinct from other kinds of prayer, for in adoration we enter the rarefied air of selfless devotion. We ask for nothing but to cherish him. We seek nothing but his exaltation. We focus on nothing but his goodness. “In the prayer of *adoration* we love God for himself, for his very being, for his radiant joy.”

#### Question to Consider

Do you find this idea of asking, “nothing but to cherish him,” familiar or unfamiliar? Does it feel forced or artificial to think of God in this starry-eyed, blown-away manner?

#### Prayer Practice

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God’s character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.” Ps. 145:1-3*

#### Read the Excerpt

There are two sides to the Prayer of Adoration: thanksgiving and praise. The usual distinction between these two experiences is this: in thanksgiving we give glory to God for *what he has done for us*; in praise we give glory to God for *who he is in himself*.

The distinction is valid, but we must not make too much of it. In experience the two weave themselves in and out of one another and become part of an organic whole. The biblical authors frequently use the words interchangeably and even on top of one another: “I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you” (Ps. 35:18). Simultaneously, thanksgiving and praise splash across the experience of all true adoration.

### **Question to Consider**

What are some words you naturally use to express your deep gratitude to someone you love for something they have done for you? Can you use similar words or phrases to pray in adoration of God?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God’s character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.” Ps. 145:8-9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

To the extent we can draw a line of demarcation, praise lies on a higher plane than thanksgiving. In his classic work entitled simply *Prayer*, Ole Hallesby observes, “When I give thanks, my thoughts still circle about myself to some extent. But in praise my soul ascends to self-forgetting adoration, seeing and praising only the majesty and power of God, His grace and redemption.”

### **Question to Consider**

Can you take a thing for which you are thankful to God, and then expand it to a purer focus on the KIND OF GOD who gave you such a gift?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song... For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds." Ps. 149:1, 4-5*

### **Read the Excerpt**

If we could only see the heart of the Father, we would be drawn into praise and thanksgiving more often. It is easy for us to think that God is so majestic and so highly exalted that our adoration makes no difference to him. To be sure, the self-sufficiency of God is a precious doctrine, but we should always remember the words of Saint Augustine: "God thirsts to be thirsted after."

### **Question to Consider**

Can you imagine the warmth God's heart feels when we adore Him in our prayers?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever." Ps. 145:21*

### **Read the Excerpt**

C.S. Lewis identifies several things that keep us from adoration. The first is inattention. How easy to be caught up into the whirl of life and miss the overtures of Divine Love. And it is not just that we are trapped in a rat race of acquiring things. It is the quite legitimate demands of home and family and school and work that conspire to make life a blur. Like Jack's beanstalk, our obligations seem to grow overnight. We cannot adore when we do not see.

A second obstacle is the wrong kind of attention. We see a sunset and are drawn into analysis rather than doxology. Frustrations occur, and all we are aware of is frustrations—we “ignore the smell of Deity.”

### **Question to Consider**

Can you imagine yourself as a toddler watching fireworks in the sky, or watching a butterfly land on your finger, and just raising eyes of wonder to God for beauty of it all?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.” Ps. 107:8-9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

A third obstacle to adoration is greed. “Instead of saying, ‘this also is Thou,’ one may say the fatal word *Encore*.” One reason our addiction for more, more, more destroys our ability to adore is because it keeps us from reflection. Linger over a rose or a phrase of Scripture—smelling, tasting, chewing, drinking it all in—this is the stuff of adoration. When we ask for an encore, we are asking for more than God is pleased to give. Instead of simply enjoying pleasures, we demand more pleasures—whether we enjoy them or not. Allow me to misuse an ancient passage: sufficient unto the day are the pleasures thereof!

### **Question to Consider**

Can you think of a time when you were blown away by God's goodness, or majesty, or tenderness, and immediately began thinking ahead to whether this might now be the “high” you could count on as a disciple of Jesus? Conversely, can you think of a time when you were blown away by God and called yourself to a full halt, stopping to savor, to experience, to fix the moment fast in your memory,

honoring it as the stand-alone treasure that it was, and knowing that the very memory of it would give you life every time you thought on it?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name." Ps. 9:1-2*

### **Read the Excerpt**

We start more simply. We learn about the goodness of God not by contemplating the goodness of God but by watching a butterfly. So here is my counsel: begin by paying attention to the little creatures that creep upon the earth. Do not try to study or analyze them. Just watch the birds and the squirrels and the ducks. Watch, do not evaluate, watch.

### **Question to Consider**

Is it hard to "feel spiritual" when you simply observe?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Ps. 4:7-8*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Such experiences help us on to the next stepping-stone: the practice of gratitude. We can now develop a habit of giving thanks for the simple gifts that come our way day by day. Carolyn and I have just returned from feeding some geese that now and then visit a small pond behind our house. That is something to be grateful for. I am glad for the cooler air today that cuts the edge off summer's heat. And for the marvelously symmetrical white fir outside my study window, I give thanks. You get the idea—food, home, clothes, life itself—for all these and more we practice gratitude. Try to live one entire day in utter thanksgiving. Balance every complaint with ten gratitudes, every criticism with ten compliments. When we practice gratitude, a time will come when we find ourselves saying, "Not 'please,' but 'thank you,'" as Annie Dillard notes in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*.

### **Question to Consider**

Can you imagine a day (or even a portion of a day...or a couple of hours!) in which you practiced gratitude for every good and beautiful thing you came in contact with?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness." Ps. 145:4-7*

### **Read the Excerpt**

We are now ready for a stepping-stone that we could never have managed in the beginning: magnifying God. To magnify something, you make it look larger, increasing it out of proportion. To talk about ourselves or our activities out of true proportion is dangerous indeed, but when we magnify God, we are on safe ground. We simply cannot say too much about God's goodness or love. The most exaggerated things we can think of will still be far below what is actually the case.

### **Question to Consider**

Can you remember a time when someone you loved paid you a kind and honest compliment, and those words served to make that lovely part of you grow even deeper and stronger, just by the act of someone complimenting it?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with the tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." Ps. 150:2-6*

### **Read the Excerpt**

The final stepping-stone I want to mention is joyous, hilarious, foot-stomping celebration. We clap, laugh, shout, sing, dance. Celebration is best done in community, but even when we are alone we are never alone, for we are joining the jubilee chant of angels and archangels and living creatures about which we can only guess. Like Miriam we dance and sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously, the horse and rider thrown into the sea (Exod. 15). Like Mary our soul magnifies the Lord, and our spirit rejoices in God our Savior (Luke 1).

### **Question to Consider**

Is jubilant worship a part of your church experience? Does it look suspect to you when you have seen it in others? What is your natural posture — exuberant, or reserved?

### **Prayer Practice**

Gratefully describe something wonderful that you have observed in God's character. In the same way that you would tell your sweetheart, your best friend, your parent, or your child something lovely about themselves, tell God something that you have noticed and are delighted by. Consider various character traits that are a part of the nature of God, such as creativity, faithfulness, tender love, wisdom, mystery, grace, power, or patience.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Week Five — Praying the Ordinary

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.” Ps. 105:5*

#### Read the Excerpt

Many of us today live in a kind of inner apartheid. We segregate out a small corner of pious activities and then can make no spiritual sense out of the rest of our lives. We have become so accustomed to this way of living that we fail to see the contradiction in it. The scandal of Christianity in our day is the heresy of a 5 percent spirituality.

We overcome this modern heresy by Praying the Ordinary. We pray the ordinary in three ways: first, by turning ordinary experiences of life into prayer; second, by seeing God in the ordinary experiences of life; and third, by praying throughout the ordinary experiences of life.

#### Question to Consider

Do you find it natural to pray throughout the moments of an ordinary day?

#### Prayer Practice

Ask the Holy Spirit right now to remind you to pray through your day. Choose one ordinary experience (dressing, preparing food, driving your car) that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Pay attention to moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways (beauty in nature, a warm cup of coffee, a call or text from a friend) and smile at God in response. Set your intention to be one of humble prayer for help when you find yourself frustrated or struggling in some way in the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate — bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.” Ps. 104:14-15*

#### Read the Excerpt

But think of this: in the creation and the incarnation the great God of the universe intertwined the spiritual and the material, wedded the sacred and the secular, sanctified the common and the ordinary. How astonishing! How wonderful!

The discovery of God lies in the daily and the ordinary, not in the spectacular and the heroic. If we cannot find God in the routines of home and shop, then we will not find him at all. Ours is to be a symphonic piety in which all the activities of work and play and family and worship and sex and sleep are the holy habitats of the eternal. Thomas Merton urges us to have an “unspeakable reverence for the holiness of created things.”

### **Question to Consider**

Have you tended to separate ordinary from sacred moments in your life?

### **Prayer Practice**

Thank the Lord for reminding you by his Holy Spirit to pray throughout your day. Choose one ordinary evening or bedtime experience that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Reflect on today’s moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways, whether you prayerfully noted them at the time or are just now thinking of them in retrospect, and smile at God in response. Humbly pray for further help with anything frustrating or difficult that still tugs at your mind at the end of the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands.” Ps. 90:17*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Many today see their vocation as a hindrance to prayer. “If only I had some time free from the distractions of work, then I could pray” is a common sentiment. But prayer is not another duty to add onto an already overcommitted schedule. In *Praying the Ordinary*, our vocation, far from being a hindrance, is an asset. How is this so? Is it that we learn the secret of praying as we work? Certainly this is important, but it is not why our work is such an asset to prayer. Our vocation is an asset to prayer because our work *becomes* prayer. It is prayer in action. The artist, the novelist, the surgeon, the plumber, the secretary, the lawyer, the homemaker, the farmer, the teacher—all are praying by offering their work up to God.

### **Question to Consider**

Is this concept of “offering our work up to God,” new to you? Can you imagine yourself doing a typical task in an attitude that says, “In this moment, I honor you, Jesus, as I \_\_\_\_\_.” (make breakfast, pay the bills, make this phone call)

### **Prayer Practice**

Ask the Holy Spirit right now to remind you to pray through your day. Choose one ordinary experience (dressing, preparing food, driving your car) that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps

in gratitude. Pay attention to moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways (beauty in nature, a warm cup of coffee, a call or text from a friend) and smile at God in response. Set your intention to be one of humble prayer for help when you find yourself frustrated or struggling in some way in the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”*  
Ps. 73:23-25

### **Read the Excerpt**

Anthony Bloom writes, “A prayer makes sense only if it is lived. Unless they are ‘lived,’ unless life and prayer become completely interwoven, prayers become a sort of polite madrigal which you offer to God at moments when you are giving time to Him.” The work of our hands and of our minds is acted out prayer, a love offering to the living God. In what is perhaps the finest line in the movie Chariots of Fire, Olympic runner Eric Liddell tells his sister, “Jenny, when I run, I feel his pleasure.” This is the reality that is to permeate all vocations, whether we are writing a novel or cleaning a latrine.

### **Question to Consider**

Do certain tasks “feel” more spiritual to you than others?

### **Prayer Practice**

Thank the Lord for reminding you by his Holy Spirit to pray throughout your day. Choose one ordinary evening or bedtime experience that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Reflect on today’s moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways, whether you prayerfully noted them at the time or are just now thinking of them in retrospect, and smile at God in response. Humbly pray for further help with anything frustrating or difficult that still tugs at your mind at the end of the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth...He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow.” Ps. 146:5-9*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Each activity of daily life in which we stretch ourselves on behalf of others is a prayer of action—the times when we scrimp and save in order to get the children something special; the times when we share our car with others on rainy mornings, leaving early to get them to work on time; the times when we keep up correspondence with friends or answer one last telephone call when we are dead tired at night. These times and many more like them are lived prayer. Ignatius of Loyola notes, “Everything that one turns in the direction of God is prayer.”

### **Question to Consider**

Have you experienced a sense of holy purpose in a moment of extension toward someone else in need?

### **Prayer Practice**

Ask the Holy Spirit right now to remind you to pray through your day. Choose one ordinary experience (dressing, preparing food, driving your car) that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Pay attention to moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways (beauty in nature, a warm cup of coffee, a call or text from a friend) and smile at God in response. Set your intention to be one of humble prayer for help when you find yourself frustrated or struggling in some way in the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon. It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter.” Ps. 74:16-17*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Waiting is part of ordinary time. We discover God in our waiting: waiting in checkout lines, waiting for the telephone to ring, waiting for graduation, waiting for a promotion, waiting to retire, waiting to die. The waiting itself becomes prayer as we give our waiting to God. In waiting we begin to get in touch with the rhythms of life—stillness and action, listening and decision. They are the rhythms of God. It is in the everyday and the commonplace that we learn patience, acceptance, and contentment. Saint Benedict’s criterion for allowing a visitor to stay at the monastery is that “he is content with the life as he finds it, and does not make excessive demands...but is simply content with what he finds.”

**Question to Consider**

Is waiting difficult for you? Does the idea of approaching waiting with an awareness of the rhythms of God sound hopeful?

**Prayer Practice**

Thank the Lord for reminding you by his Holy Spirit to pray throughout your day. Choose one ordinary evening or bedtime experience that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Reflect on today's moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways, whether you prayerfully noted them at the time or are just now thinking of them in retrospect, and smile at God in response. Humbly pray for further help with anything frustrating or difficult that still tugs at your mind at the end of the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

**Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

**From the Psalms**

*"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart." Ps. 86:11*

**Read the Excerpt**

Another way of Praying the Ordinary is by praying throughout the ordinary experiences of life. We pick up a newspaper and are prompted to whisper a prayer of guidance for world leaders facing monumental decisions. We are visiting with friends in a school corridor or a shopping mall, and their words prompt us to lapse into prayer for them, either verbally or silently, as the circumstances dictate. We jog through our neighborhood, blessing the families who live there. We plant our garden, thanking the God of heaven for sun and rain and all good things. This is the stuff of ordinary prayer through ordinary experience.

**Question to Consider**

Has this spontaneous type of prayer been a part of your experience, either as the one praying, or as you observe a brother or sister respond to an ordinary moment with prayer?

**Prayer Practice**

Ask the Holy Spirit right now to remind you to pray through your day. Choose one ordinary experience (dressing, preparing food, driving your car) that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Pay attention to moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways (beauty in nature, a warm cup of coffee, a call or text from a friend) and smile at God in response. Set your intention to be one of humble prayer for help when you find yourself frustrated or struggling in some way in the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Day Four: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### From the Psalms

*“I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.” Ps. 89:1*

### Read the Excerpt

Prayers arising out of the context of the family are perhaps the most common expression of Praying the Ordinary. Edward Hays in *Prayers for the Domestic Church* provides a whole host of prayers that can be participated in by the entire family, whether large or small. It includes everything from “Blessing Prayer for an Automobile” to “Prayer for Protection in a Time of Storm or Danger” to “Prayer of a Single Parent.” As we pray in the context of the family, we learn that holiness is homemade. The earliest altar was the hearth whose open fire burned in the center of the home. Even today the family table can be a significant altar where meals are celebrated and all the great and small events of our personal histories can be recounted. Here mothers and fathers fulfill the priestly role.

### Question to Consider

Can you remember a time when your home provided a “church moment” for you and your loved ones?

### Prayer Practice

Thank the Lord for reminding you by his Holy Spirit to pray throughout your day. Choose one ordinary evening or bedtime experience that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Reflect on today’s moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways, whether you prayerfully noted them at the time or are just now thinking of them in retrospect, and smile at God in response. Humbly pray for further help with anything frustrating or difficult that still tugs at your mind at the end of the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Day Five: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### From the Psalms

*“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.’” Ps. 91:1-2*

### Read the Excerpt

We can also establish a “hermitage” in our home. A hermitage is a house especially set aside for silence and solitude. In ancient Russia every village had its hermitage, or *poustinia*. We today lack such a religious sanctuary in the community, which argues all the more for having one in the home.

It could be a den or a study or an attic room. It could be almost any quiet place in the home, which, when being used as a hermitage, remains off limits to the rest of the family.

### **Question to Consider**

What spot in your home might be designated a hermitage? (Even choosing a “sanctified end of the couch” might meet the need!)

### **Prayer Practice**

Ask the Holy Spirit right now to remind you to pray through your day. Choose one ordinary experience (dressing, preparing food, driving your car) that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Pay attention to moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways (beauty in nature, a warm cup of coffee, a call or text from a friend) and smile at God in response. Set your intention to be one of humble prayer for help when you find yourself frustrated or struggling in some way in the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.” Ps. 90:14*

### **Read the Excerpt**

All of us share in what D. Elton Trueblood calls “the common ventures of life”—birth, marriage, work, death. Jesus, in his life and in his teaching, gave sacramental significance to these ordinary experiences of daily life. In his own birth the common and the sacred have been forever united. He rejoiced in the wedding of a couple in Galilee and added wine to the sacred festivities. He rubbed shoulders with fishermen and tax collectors and other entrepreneurial types. And he stared down death without flinching so that we can face our own death with hope.

### **Question to Consider**

When you consider the shared human experiences of birth, relationship, work, and the reality of death, how is your prayer affected? How might that common experience of all people help you grow in grace and in a willingness to pray for others as you might for yourself?

**Prayer Practice**

Thank the Lord for reminding you by his Holy Spirit to pray throughout your day. Choose one ordinary evening or bedtime experience that you will offer to God prayerfully, perhaps in gratitude. Reflect on today's moments of divine presence in simple, ordinary ways, whether you prayerfully noted them at the time or are just now thinking of them in retrospect, and smile at God in response. Humbly pray for further help with anything frustrating or difficult that still tugs at your mind at the end of the ordinary moments of your day.

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## Week Six — Intercessory Prayer

(Simple definition of *intercession*: intervening on behalf of someone else)

### Day One: Morning/Midday

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

#### From the Psalms

*“But you are a shield around me, O Lord;... To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the Lord sustains me.” Ps. 3:3-5*

#### Read the Excerpt

If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer. Intercession is a way of loving others.

In the ongoing work of the kingdom of God, nothing is more important than Intercessory Prayer. People today desperately need the help that we can give them. Marriages are being shattered. Children are being destroyed. Individuals are living lives of quiet desperation, without purpose or future. And we can make a difference...if we will learn to pray on their behalf.

#### Question to Consider

Think of this image of stepping into trouble in order to intervene on behalf of someone who needs help. Has intercessory praying for others something you have thought of as a part of your “capital-W Work,” work that is participation in the building of the kingdom of God?

#### Prayer Practice

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

Here’s an example of praying scripture for an individual, in case this is a new practice for you and it is confusing:

*“Lord, you are a shield around my husband;... May he cry aloud to you, Lord; I know you will answer him from your holy hill. May my husband lie down and sleep; may he wake again because the Lord sustains him.” Ps. 3:3-5*

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

### Day One: Midday/Evening

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.” Ps. 5:11-12*

### **Read the Excerpt**

We are not left alone in this interceding work of ours. Our little prayers of intercession are backed up and reinforced by the eternal Intercessor. Paul assures us that it is “Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34). As if to intensify the truth of this, the writer to the Hebrews declares Jesus an eternal priest after the order of Melchizedek who “always lives to make intercession” (Heb. 7:25).

### **Question to Consider**

Do you think of your prayers on behalf of others, your attempts to intervene in their troubles, as being woven together with and perfected by the power of Jesus as you pray?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

Here’s one more example of praying for an individual to help you embrace this practice:

*“May my mom take refuge in you, Lord, and be glad; let her ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over Mom, may she love your name and rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous, and my Mom belongs to you, Jesus; surround her with your favor as with a shield.” Ps. 5:11-12*

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Awake, my God; decree justice. Let the assembled peoples gather around you. Rule over them from on high; let the Lord judge the peoples. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High. O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked, and make the righteous secure. My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.” Ps. 7:6-10*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Our ministry of intercession is made possible only because of Christ’s continuing ministry of intercession. It is a wonderful truth to know that we are saved by faith alone, that there is nothing we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. Likewise, we pray by faith alone—Jesus Christ our eternal Intercessor is responsible for our prayer life. “Unless he intercedes,” writes Ambrose of Milan, “there is no intercourse with God either for us or for all saints.”

### **Question to Consider**

Have you ever felt paralyzed, unable to pray for someone because you just didn't know the right words to pray? Does it help to recognize the ministry of intercession that Jesus provides for our flawed efforts with His perfection?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

Here's an example of intercessory prayer for a group of people; you do not need to pray for a group if you have an individual on your heart. This is just an example of another way to personalize scripture as you intercede:

*“Awake, my God; decree justice. Let those who are suffering as they experience homelessness gather around **you**. Rule over them from on high; let the Lord judge the peoples; you are the only one worthy of the role of judge. Judge me, as I intercede for them and advocate for their needs, O Lord, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High; I am yours, and the grace of Jesus defines me. O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked, end unjust practices that leave people without a home, that leave children unable to safely sleep at night, that discriminate against people because of skin color, because of a criminal record, because of joblessness, and instead make the righteous secure. May those hurting ones look to you, Jesus, may they find their spiritual home in you as we seek to provide them with a physical home. Our shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. We depend on you to provide!” Ps. 7:6-10*

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Two: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” Ps. 9:9-10*

### **Read the Excerpt**

But here we are faced with the practical question of how we pray in the name of Jesus. Any thoughtful person knows that this means far more than just tacking on a rote formula to the end of our prayers. But what exactly does it mean? To pray in the name of Jesus means to pray in full assurance of the great work Christ accomplished—in his life, by his death, through his resurrection, and by means of his continuing reign at the right hand of God the Father.

### **Question to Consider**

Does this idea of praying in Jesus' name as a POSTURE, an ATTITUDE, a RELATIONSHIP, rather than simply a memorized phrase you speak, inspire you to pray for others with greater confidence and faith?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

Here's one final example of praying scripture for a group of people:

*"Lord, you are a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. People in prisons are most definitely oppressed; regardless of why they are behind bars, they are suffering loneliness, fear, and frustration, and they long to be loved. Those who know your name will trust in you, and I am asking you to remind those in prison of every moment in their lives up to this point in which they have encountered you, seen you at work, experienced your love; may they know your name, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you." Ps. 9:9-10*

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*"The Lord is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more." Ps. 10:16-18*

### **Read the Excerpt**

To pray in the name of Jesus means that we are praying in accord with the way and nature of Christ. It means that we are making the kinds of intercessions he would make if he were among us in the flesh. We are his ambassadors, commissioned by him. We have been given his name to use with his full authority. Therefore, the content and the character of our praying must be, of necessity, in unity with his nature.

### **Question to Consider**

Does this understanding of the relationship implied when we pray in the name of Jesus alter some of the perhaps short-sighted or selfish prayers we may be tempted to pray for a loved one? (e.g. *praying for a loved one with addiction asking that they be spared a painful consequence of their choices; instead we might pray in unity with Jesus that our loved one would crave Jesus more than the substance to which they are addicted, and that EVERY outcome of their choices would remind them again that there is something truly satisfying available to them in the Lord. Another example: rather than praying for our spouse to be content and happy when we know that they are not choosing to live in ways that will lead to growth as a disciple of Jesus, we might instead pray that every foolish choice they make would leave them cold, and that*

*the Holy Spirit would stir their spirits and minds to remember the fulfillment they have found in Jesus in the past, that they would seek true JOY.)*

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Three: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’...Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.”*  
Ps. 16:1-2, 5

### **Read the Excerpt**

So how do we pray in Jesus’ name, that is, in conformity to his nature? Jesus himself says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). This “abide in me” is the all-inclusive condition for effective intercession. It is the key for prayer in the name of Jesus. We learn to become like the branch, which receives its life from the vine: “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (John 15:4). Nothing is more important to a life of prayer than learning how to become a branch.

### **Question to Consider**

Do you desire to keep learning and longing more and more to abide in Christ, not settling for a comfortable “I’m good here,” attitude?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.” Ps. 18:16-19*

### **Read the Excerpt**

As we live this way, we develop what Thomas à Kempis calls “a familiar friendship with Jesus.” We become accustomed to his face. We distinguish the voice of the true Shepherd from that of religious hucksters in the same way professional jewelers distinguish a diamond from glass imitations—by acquaintanceship. When we have been around the genuine article long enough, the cheap and the shoddy become obvious.

### **Question to Consider**

When you feel uncertain how to pray about something, wondering what the will of God is in a specific situation, will you return to this truth, and focus on seeking His face, rather than over-focusing on the situation itself?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Four: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God... Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” Ps. 25:1, 4-5*

### **Read the Excerpt**

When we begin praying for others, we soon discover that it is easy to become discouraged at the results, which seem frustratingly slow and uneven. This is because we are entering the strange mix of divine influence and human autonomy. God never compels, and so the divine influence always allows a way of escape. No one is ever forced into a robot style of obedience.

### **Question to Consider**

Have you ever been irritated by this truth? Can you choose to confess that irritation to God as a humble offering — “I don’t get why it works this way, but You are God and I am not, and that is a good thing.”

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Morning/Midday**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“Your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O Lord, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.” Ps. 26:3-7*

### **Read the Excerpt**

Intercession is done individually; it is also done corporately. Jesus promises to be present in great power whenever the community of faith is truly gathered in his name (Matt. 18:20). When enough faith, hope, and love are found in any given community, the blessings are multiplied, for then organized, corporate, intercessory prayer is possible.

### **Question to Consider**

Does meditating on this idea of the power in corporate prayer increase your commitment to pray with other brothers and sisters, longing for the special relationship we recognize when we say, “Lord, hear our prayer,” with one voice?

### **Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*

## **Day Five: Midday/Evening**

*Silence, stillness, and centering before God (2 Minutes)*

### **From the Psalms**

*“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Ps. 34:18*

**Read the Excerpt**

It is God's desire to bring individuals and families into saving faith. It is God's desire to bring people off of addictions to drugs, sex, money, status. It is God's desire to deliver people from racism, sexism, nationalism, consumerism. It is God's desire to harvest cities, bringing whole communities into Gospel fidelity. Organized, corporate, intercessory prayer is a crucial means for the fulfillment of these yearnings in the heart of God.

**Question to Consider**

Will you commit to pray regularly with others as a part of your kingdom work?

**Prayer Practice**

Using the passage from Psalms above, pray for someone who is on your heart right now, inserting their name into the verses, changing any pronouns to personalize this prayer. If it would make sense to pray these things for ourselves, it makes sense to pray them for others as well!

*Conclude your prayer practice with silence (2 minutes)*