

2019



LENTEN MANUAL



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Lenten Manual

Wednesday March 6 – Saturday April 13

INTRODUCING LENT

Lent is the period of 40 days preceding Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter – i.e. the start of Holy Week). It is a subdued time of repentance, reflection and discipline that commemorates Jesus' 40 days of fasting and trial in the desert (Matt. 4:1ff).

Since at least the third century AD, it has been traditional to give up something pleasurable that is part of our everyday lives. By giving up something we regularly enjoy or do, we remind ourselves of how easily we become attached to pleasure and habits, and we have the opportunity to re-focus our lives on God. Monks of the Franciscan order call this 'detachment' – letting go of 'stuff' that preoccupies our lives – thus creating more room for God (and for ourselves and others). Each time we are stirred by our old pleasure or habit, we stop and consciously remember that all of our needs are fulfilled by God. During Lent we also acquire new disciplines and habits. We turn away from what is soul-deadening towards that which is soul-nurturing.

The following excerpt describes the movement and spirituality of Lent well.¹

A Time to Repent

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

John Chrysostom (AD 347–407)

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

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

... The purpose of the fast with the accompanying prayer and resulting almsgiving [giving money, time, ourselves] is not to accumulate works and gain favor in the eyes of God. Such a view is unbiblical and

¹ From Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), p. 99 ff.

leads to legalism. Rather, the purpose of fasting is to establish, maintain, repair, and transform our relationship with God. For fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are means through which we express our spiritual pilgrimage during Lent, and through these means we experience the turning away from sin and conversion to Christ ordered by the spirituality of Lent.

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

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

HOW TO BEGIN

Consider giving up some habit or pattern, and to acquire a new spiritual discipline or healthy habit in its place. If you are not sure where to begin, consider these questions:

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

As you consider what new practices or habits God would like you to acquire, consider the virtues of a mature Christian life (e.g. Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 12:9-21). If you need help, encouragement, or someone to talk to, please come and see us, or speak to a mature brother or sister in Christ. Do not let uncertainty or concerns stop you from seeking a deeper walk with God.

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE & HOW TO USE IT

Everyone has different time constraints. You may not be able to do everything each day and may need to hold off some of the options until a later time. That is fine!

At the beginning of each week, you will find:

- A memory verse for the week. This year they focus on the sufficiency of God for our salvation.
- An overview of group events coming that week

Primary activities for each day of the week are as follows:

Sunday Worship Services. (Everyone is encouraged to come both morning and evening)

Monday	Reflect on an excerpt from a Christian book.
Tuesday	Watch short online video for contemplation.
Wednesday	Muse over an artwork.
Thursday	Reflect on an excerpt from a Christian book.
Friday	Enjoy a piece of music. Come for a potluck “Encounter” dinner.
Saturday	Consider a moment in Church History.

Please adapt activities to suit your needs, for example, if you are not able to attend a Morning Prayer or Eucharist at UC (every Monday and Wednesday at 7am, and Friday at 8am), consider arranging a prayer time during your lunch break or a prayer phone call with a friend at a time that suits you.

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

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

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

LISTENING TO GOD

In this guide we encourage you to take time in your devotions and through the day to listen to God. It is the foundation of your relationship with God. You can be attentive to His voice even as you get on with other things. In his book, *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard describes how he ‘listens’ to God.

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

Often by the end of an hour or so there has stood forth within my consciousness an idea or thought with that peculiar quality, spirit and content that I have come to associate with God’s voice. If so, I may write it down for further study. I also may decide to discuss the matter with others, usually without informing them that “God has told me...” Or I may decide

to reconsider the matter by repeating the same process after a short period of time. Remember Gideon (Judges 6:11-40). Remember too that scientists check their results by rerunning experiments. We should be so humble.

(Hearing God, p. 199-200)

PLANNING FOR LENT

- Pray, asking the Lord to show you what habit, routine, or dependency He would like you to give up for the period of Lent.
- Pray, asking the Lord to show you what new practice He would like you to acquire. Record your commitments below.

My Plan for Lent

Week 1

Ash Wednesday March 6 – Saturday March 9

Memory Verse for the Week

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

Isaiah 55:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;

⁷ **let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may
have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the
LORD.

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Ash Wednesday Services	-----	Wed Mar 6, 7:00am & 7:30pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Fri Mar 9, 8:00-8:45am
Encounter	-----	Fri Mar 9, 6:00pm

Wednesday March 6

Ash Wednesday

Attend the service at 7am and/or 7.30pm today.

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

There are 6 steps. Do not skip any because of time, rather let some only take 2-3 minutes (about 15 mins for the whole exercise). The more time you invest the more you will benefit, just like training at a gym. BUT ... just like physical exercise, spiritual exercise builds – do not strain yourself at the start. Do as much as blesses you; don't make it a chore! Persevere, even if it initially feels dry or hard.

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

We confess that we are set this day in the midst
of your awesome, awful work.

We will, because we have no alternative,
be present this day
to your dreadful work of termination.

We watch while you pull down
and dismantle
that with which you are finished.

We will, because we have no alternative,
be present this day
to your dream-filled work
of evoking,
imagining,
forming,
and inviting.

We are double-minded in your presence,
because we treasure what you end
and we fear what you conjure—
but we are your people
and trust you all this day
in your awesome,
awful work.

Override our reluctance
and take us with you
in justice
and mercy
and peace.

Take us with you in your overriding,
that our day may be a day of joy
and well-being
and newness
from your very hand.

In the name of your decisive newness,
even Jesus. Amen.

Loyola University, Bastille Day / July 14, 1989

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Note: Some scholars date the didache [teaching] as early as 60 AD. This means that it pre-dates most of the New Testament. It is an indication of the essentials that the church was teaching the Gentiles as they came to faith in Christ. You will see echoes of Jesus' teaching as we later encounter it in the Gospels. It is instructive for each of us to consider whether we live the life described here.

The Didache OR *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*

The teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the twelve apostles.

1. There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways.

(2) Now this is the way of life: first, “you shall love God, who made you”; second, “your neighbor as yourself”; and “whatever you do not wish to happen to you, do not do to another.”³

(3) The teaching of these words is this: “Bless those who curse you,” and “pray for your enemies,” and “fast for those who persecute you.” “For what credit is it, if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” But “you must love those who hate you,”⁵ and you will not have an enemy. (4) Abstain from physical and bodily cravings. “If someone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other as well,”⁷ and you will be perfect. If someone “forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles”; “if someone takes your cloak, give him your tunic also”; “if someone takes from you what belongs to you, do not demand it back,”⁹ for you cannot do so. (5) “Give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand it back,” for the Father wants something from his own gifts to be given to everyone. Blessed is the one who gives according to the command, for such a person is innocent. Woe to the one who receives: if, on the one hand, someone who is in need receives, this person is innocent, but the one who does not have need will have to explain why and for what purpose he received, and upon being imprisoned will be interrogated about what he has done, and will not be released from there until he has repaid every last cent.¹¹ (6) But it has also been said concerning this: “Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it.”

2. The second commandment of the teaching is: (2) “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery”; you shall not corrupt boys; you shall not be sexually promiscuous; “you shall not steal”; you shall not practice magic; you shall not engage in sorcery; you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s possessions; (3) you shall not commit perjury; you shall not give false testimony”; you shall not speak evil; you shall not hold a grudge. (4) You shall not be double-minded, or double-tongued, for the “double-tongue” is a deadly snare. (5) Your word must not be false or meaningless, but confirmed by action. (6) You shall not be greedy or avaricious, or a hypocrite or malicious or arrogant. You shall not hatch evil plots against your neighbor. (7) You shall not hate anyone; instead you shall reprove some, and pray for some, and some you shall love more than your own life.

3. My child, flee from evil of every kind, and from everything resembling it. (2) Do not become angry, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous or quarrelsome or hot-tempered, for all these things breed murders. (3) My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication. Do not be foul-mouthed or let your eyes roam, for all these things breed adultery. (4) My child, do not be an auger, since it leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter or an astrologer or a magician, or even desire to see them, for all these things breed idolatry. (5) My child, do not be a liar, since lying leads to theft. Do not be avaricious or conceited, for all these things breed thefts. (6) My child, do not be a grumbler, since it leads to blasphemy. Do not be arrogant or evil-minded, for all these things breed blasphemies.

(7) Instead, be humble, for “the humble shall inherit the earth.” (8) Be patient and merciful and innocent and quiet and good, and revere always the words which you have heard. (9) Do not exalt yourself or permit your soul to become arrogant. Your soul shall not associate with the lofty, but live with the righteous and the humble. (10) Accept as good the things that happen to you, knowing that nothing transpires apart from God.

4. My child, night and day remember the one who preaches God’s word to you, and honor him as though he were the Lord. For wherever the Lord’s nature is preached, there the Lord is. (2) Moreover, you shall seek out daily the presence of the saints, that you may find support in their words. (3) You shall not cause division, but shall make peace between those who quarrel. You shall judge righteously; you shall not show partiality when reproving transgressions. (4) You shall not waver with regard to your decisions.

(5) Do not be someone who stretches out his hands to receive, but withdraws them when it comes to giving. (6) If you earned something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins. (7) You shall not hesitate to give, nor shall you grumble when giving, for you shall yet come to know who is the good paymaster of the reward. (8) You shall not turn away from someone in need, but shall share everything with your brother, and not claim that anything is your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things!

(9) You shall not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God. (10) You shall not give orders to your slave or servant girl (who hope in the same God as you) when you are angry, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both. For he comes to call not with regard to reputation but upon those whom the Spirit has prepared. (11) And you slaves shall be submissive to your masters in respect and fear, as to a symbol of God.

(12) You shall hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. (13) You must not forsake the Lord’s commandments, but must guard what you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything. (14) In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

5. But the way of death is this: first of all, it is evil and completely cursed; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisy, duplicity, deceit, arrogance, malice, stubbornness, greed, foul speech, jealousy, audacity, pride, boastfulness. (2) It is the way of persecutors of good people, of those hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not adhering to what is good or to righteous judgment, being on the alert not for what is good but for what is evil, from whom gentleness and patience are far away, loving worthless things, pursuing reward, having no mercy for the poor, not working on behalf of the oppressed, not knowing him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God’s creation, turning away from someone in need, oppressing the afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, lawless judges of the poor, utterly sinful. May you be delivered, children, from all these things!

6. See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, for such a person teaches you without regard for God. (2) For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you are not able, then do what you can.

(3) Now concerning food, bear what you are able, but in any case keep strictly away from meat sacrificed to idols, for it involves the worship of dead gods.

7. Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”²³ in running water. (2) But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. (3) But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times “in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.” (4) And before the baptism, let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.

8. But do not let your fasts coincide with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday.

(2) Nor should you pray like the hypocrites. Instead, “pray like this,” just as the Lord commanded in his Gospel:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our debt,
as we also forgive our debtors;
and do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.

(3) Pray like this three times a day.

[... paragraph 9 continues with instructions on how to celebrate the Eucharist ...]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Isaiah 58:1-14; Hebrews 3:12-4:13

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

PRAYER FROM THE PSALMS

From Psalm 141:1-5

I call on you, O Yahweh; hasten to me.
Listen to my voice when I call to you.
Let my prayer be set before you as incense,
the lifting up of my palms as the evening offering.
Set a guard, O Yahweh, over my mouth;
keep watch over the door of my lips.
Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,
to practice wicked deeds
with men who do iniquity;
and do not let me eat of their delicacies.
Let a righteous one strike me in kindness,
and let him chasten me.
It is oil for my head; let not my head refuse.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Thursday March 7

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

There are 6 steps. Do not skip any because of time, rather let some only take 2-3 minutes (about 15 mins for the whole exercise). The more time you invest the more you will benefit, just like training at a gym. BUT ... just like physical exercise, spiritual exercise builds – do not strain yourself at the start. Do as much as blesses you; don't make it a chore! Persevere, even if it initially feels dry or hard.

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

God has spoken by His Word and Spirit. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun). Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Jesus, Jesus; for the sake of this Thy Name,
 deal with me according to this Name.
Jesus, Jesus; forget Thy proud provoker,
 and bend Thine eye upon the poor invoker of Thy Name,
 the Name so sweet,
 the Name so dear,
 the Name so full of comfort to a sinner,
 and so full of blessed hope.

For what is Jesus but Saviour?
Therefore, Jesus, for Thine own self's sake be a Jesus to me;
Thou who formedst me, that I perish not;
 who redeemedst me, that Thou condemn me not;
 who createdst me by Thy goodness,
 that Thy handiwork perish not by my iniquity.

Recognise and own, Benignest, what is Thine;
 take away what is another's.

Jesus, Jesus mercy on me, while the day of mercy lasts,
 that Thou damn me not in the day of judgment.

For what profit shalt Thou have in my blood,
 if I go down into eternal corruption?

'For the dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord,
 nor any of them that go down to hell' (Ps. 103:17).

If Thou fold me in the wide, wide Bosom of Thy mercy,
 that Bosom will be none the less wide on my account.

Therefore admit me, O most desired Jesus,
 admit me into the number of Thine elect;
 that with them I may praise Thee,
 and enjoy Thee,
 and make my boast in Thee amongst all who love Thy Name;
 who with the Father and the Holy Ghost reignest gloriously
 throughout unending ages. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 42–43). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK



R.O. Hodgell, *Oh Ye of Little Faith*, ink on paper, c. 1960

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

– Matthew 14:28-31

Although simplistic in nature, this image tells a powerful story. With just a few loose strokes, we see the power and strength of Jesus, who effortlessly stands on the water and reaches down for Peter. In contrast, we see Peter’s panic as he struggles in chaos to stay afloat. The image of Peter’s desperate reach for Jesus and of the firm grip of Christ is striking.

1. Even in the midst of doubt and fear, Jesus is there to save us if only we will reach for Him. How have you seen this reality in your own life?
2. When in your life have you doubted Jesus?
3. When in your life has Jesus saved you?

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 37:1-36; Romans 14:1-23

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

PRAYER FROM THE PSALMS

From Psalm 16:1–2, 5, 9–11

Protect me, O God,
for I take refuge in you.
Oh my soul you have said to Yahweh, "You are my Lord.
I have no good apart from you."
Yahweh is the portion which is my share and my cup.
You hold my lot.
Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices.
Yes, my body will dwell in safety,
for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
you will not give your faithful one to see the grave.
You will make known to me the path of life.
In your presence is fullness of joy.
At your right hand are pleasures forever.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Friday March 8

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

There are 6 steps. Do not skip any because of time, rather let some only take 2-3 minutes (about 15 mins for the whole exercise). The more time you invest the more you will benefit, just like training at a gym. BUT ... just like physical exercise, spiritual exercise builds – do not strain yourself at the start. Do as much as blesses you; don't make it a chore! Persevere, even if it initially feels dry or hard.

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 39:1-23; Matthew 25:1-30

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF DWIGHT L MOODY

Our Heavenly Father,

we pray you to forgive our lack of enthusiasm.

We pray you to forgive us for our coldness.

We pray you to forgive us for loving you so little
and serving you so poorly.

O God, help us to reconsecrate ourselves to you and your service.

May the Spirit that came upon Gideon and Joshua and Elijah,
and that came on the day of Pentecost,
come upon us here.

O Spirit of the living God,

fall upon us here,

and may our hearts be all on fire for the Son of God.

And may we be willing to lay aside our dignity
and position
and standing,

and go forth into the vineyard and work for you.

O Spirit of God,

come upon us

and give us power to work for Christ;

power to preach the Gospel,

power to tell the story of the Cross.

We ask it all in the name of your beloved Son. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Nature, God, and Pulpit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992). pp. 104–110.

The Corruption of Creation

The Bible, that most realistic of books, knows that the world is not so orderly as we would like to believe and that at the heart of both nature and history there is some deep corruption. Job and Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalmists called into question the optimism of Wisdom theology,

and indeed, that theology itself set boundaries on human understanding of the universe. Human beings are wondrous creatures, it said, and they have wondrous technological and intellectual powers,

but where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
Mortals do not know the way to it,
and it is not found in the land of the living.

(Job 28:12–13, NRSV)

There is no way to read the way to a perfect order from the orderliness and rationality of the universe, for that universe itself participates in some awful disorder and irrationality. Listen again to Annie Dillard as she tells us about parasites:

Parasitic insects comprise ten percent of all known animal species. How can this be understood? Certainly we give our infants the wrong idea about their fellow creatures in the world. Teddy bears should come with tiny stuffed bear-lice; ten percent of all baby bibs and rattles should be adorned with colorful blowflies, maggots, and screw-worms.... This itch, this gasp in the lung, this coiled worm in the gut, hatching egg in the sinew, warblehole in the hide—is a sort of rent, paid by all creatures who live in the real world with us now.... Chomp. It is the thorn in the flesh of the world, another sign if any be needed, that the world is actual and fringed, pierced here and there, and through and through, with the toothed conditions of time and the mysterious, coiled spring of death.

The world is not so orderly as we would like to believe.

Our realistic Bible has many ways of expressing that. It maintains in Genesis 9 that some dark shadow of human beings now falls over all the earth:

The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. (vv. 2–3)

We cast a dark shadow upon every one of earth's creatures because we can kill them and we can eat them. But whether worm in the gut or bear in the forest or shark in the ocean, they can also kill and eat us, can't they? Chomp. And so throughout the pages of the Old Testament, there is pictured an antagonism between human beings and animals. In 1 Samuel, David, in his life as a shepherd, had to be delivered from the paws of the lion and the bear (17:37). In the books of Kings, dogs lick up the blood of murderous Ahab (1 Kings 21:19; 22:38) and of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:10, 36). In 2 Kings 2:24, two she-bears come out of the woods to devour the boys who make fun of Elisha, just as a lion kills the disobedient prophet in 1 Kings 13:24 (cf. 1 Kings 20:36).

In the world of most of the Old Testament, nature is not benign or benevolent but threatening and terrifying. Therefore, the one "who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,/who abides in the shadow of the Almighty," must be reassured of God's protection from the terrors of nature:

You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

(Ps. 91:1, 13)

Further, the antagonism of nature over against human beings is so taken for granted that God in his wrathful judgment can repeatedly compare himself to a devouring lion (Hos. 5:14; Jer. 25:38) or to a bear robbed of her cubs (Hos. 13:7–8). Or, in a startling figure, the Lord compares himself to a moth eating up the fabric of our lives (Hos. 5:12; Ps. 39:11; cf. Isa. 50:9; 51:8). Or in Hosea 5:12 he even likens himself to what we now know are the bacteria of dry rot that undermine our foundations.

In the thought of much of the Bible, the world of nature is no peaceable kingdom. Rather, the people of God are continually threatened, not only by beasts and serpents but also by fire and lightning (Job 1:16; cf. Num. 11:1), destroying wind (Job 1:19; Ps. 48:7; Jer. 4:11–12), disease

and plagues and scabrous growths (Exod. 32:35; 2 Sam. 12:14–15; 24:15; 2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chron. 21:18; Isa. 3:17), drought and famine and locusts (Jer. 14:1–10; 42:16; 2 Sam. 21:1; Isa. 14:30; Amos 7:1), and pestilence and tumors (1 Sam. 5:6; Num. 14:12; 1 Chron. 21:14), all of which can be instruments of the wrath of the Lord who controls them.

This is not to say that every natural disaster which happens in our day should be viewed as a judgment from God. There are times in the Bible when a natural disaster takes place unaccompanied by any mention of God's use of it in judgment (e.g., Gen. 12:10; 1 Kings 19:11–12). God has indeed set orders and processes into the natural world, which, if we defy them, lead us to bring disaster upon our own heads. Certainly too, when other people suffer a natural catastrophe, we cannot point a finger at them and declare that they are suffering for their sin. When we suffer natural calamity, it does seem wise, however, in the light of a passage such as Amos 4:6–10, to ask if God is trying to tell us something, to urge upon us repentance, or to turn our lives in another direction. The Lord of nature can use nature's forces in his work of discipline and judgment.

Indeed, according to Hosea, God can prevent in Israel conceptions and pregnancies and births, giving instead miscarrying wombs and dry breasts (9:11–12). So Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, prays in this manner:

When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee, if they pray toward this place, ... then hear thou in heaven ... and grant rain upon thy land.... If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar; ... whatever plague, whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by any man or by all thy people Israel ... then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and act. (1 Kings 8:35–39)

God controls the ways of nature and uses them in his judgment on his people, but the point is that in his judgment he uses that which is at hand. He uses the antagonism of the natural world toward human beings—those deep and fundamental corruptions that have put nature out of joint and made it possible for it to be a power for evil rather than for good. Moth and rust consume, says the Lord. They chomp away. So do not lay up treasures for yourselves that can fall victim to that corruption (Matt. 6:19–20). Dark powers now are loose in our world, in ourselves, and in the whole cosmos around us. The Bible knows that, and in that knowing, it is a very realistic book.

Sin, the Root of Corruption

Where did this corruption of the universe come from? We all know the answer—it came from us. In Pogo's language, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." God made the world "very good," with all things beautiful and orderly, and the dark shadow laid upon the face of the earth is the shadow of sinful humankind.

Loren Eiseley wrote of an experience he once had when he was a child. After removing a cover from an old well, he peered down along a shaft of sunlight into the well's dark and dank depths. Some twenty feet down there was a rusty pipe projecting across the well space, he says, and he saw suddenly scurrying along that pipe into the darkness a spidery thing of hair and many legs. Shivering and horrified, he quickly set the rotting boards covering the well back into place. "Something that did not love the sun was down there," he wrote, "something that could walk through total darkness upon slender footholds over evil waters, something that had come down there by preference from above." And that's the way it is with life. Scientists used to think that human life evolved from the primal ooze at the bottom of the sea. But after countless investigations, they know better now. Human life came into being on this planet when there was air and light and green. And if we have descended into some abyss of darkness, we have worked

our way down. God created life good; we turned it into evil. As Jesus told us, we have loved the darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

The Bible tells the story of that corrupted and corrupting love in Genesis 3, of course—that chapter which is meant to be the story of the way we all have walked in our relationship with God. We have previously discussed, in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, what we were meant to be and how. Genesis 3 now tells us what we have become—rebels in the kingdom of God, subversives of his purposes, refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limits and attempting to be our own gods and goddesses. But Genesis also tells us what effect that sin has had on the world of nature. It has marred and distorted every one of God’s good gifts.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 40:1-23; Romans 15:1-33

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CHARLES SPURGEON

Lord, teach us to be resigned to your will;
teach us to delight in your law;
teach us to have no will but your will;
teach us to be sure that everything you do is good—
is the very best that can be done.

Help us to leave our concerns in your divine hands,
being persuaded that you have sway even over evil;
that out of it you bring good, and better still,
and better still in infinite progression,
till your high purposes shall develop in your own perfect glory,
and in the perfect bliss of all those who put their trust in you. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Saturday March 9

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

There are 6 steps. Do not skip any because of time, rather let some only take 2-3 minutes (about 15 mins for the whole exercise). The more time you invest the more you will benefit, just like training at a gym. BUT ... just like physical exercise, spiritual exercise builds – do not strain yourself at the start. Do as much as blesses you; don't make it a chore! Persevere, even if it initially feels dry or hard.

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

God has spoken by His Word and Spirit. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun). Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER OF RICHARD BAXTER

O most great, most just and gracious God,
 you are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,
 you condemn the ungodly, impenitent, and unbelievers;
but you have promised mercy through Jesus Christ to all who repent and believe in him.
We confess that we were conceived in sin,
 and are by nature children of wrath;
 and have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.
In our baptism you took us into the bond of the holy covenant,
 but we did not remember our Creator in the days of our youth,
 with the fear, and love, and obedience which we owed you.
We did not please and glorify you in all things,
 nor walk with you by faith in a heavenly conversation,
 nor serve you fervently with all our might;
instead we fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the carnal mind.
We have neglected and abused your holy worship,
 your holy name,
 and your holy day.
We have dishonoured our superiors, and neglected our inferiors.
We have dealt unjustly and uncharitably with our neighbours,
 not loving them as ourselves,
 nor doing to others as we would they should do to us;
we have not sought first your kingdom and righteousness
 and been contented with our daily bread,
but have been careful and troubled about many things,
 neglecting the one thing necessary. ...
But in your mercy, your Son, and your promises is our hope.
Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father.
Be reconciled to us,
 and let the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us from all our sins.
Take us for your children,
 and give us the Spirit of your Son.
Sanctify us wholly,
shed abroad your love in our hearts
 and cause us to love you with all our hearts.
Make your face to shine upon your servants;
 save us from our sins,
 and from the wrath to come. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

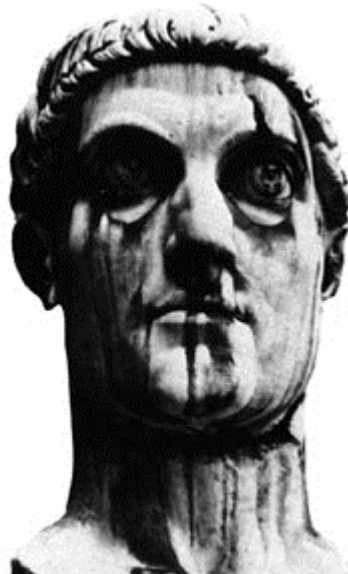
The Edict of Milan (313)

The agreement shifted Christianity from being an illicit, persecuted sect to being a welcome—and soon dominant—religion of the Roman Empire.

by DAVID F. WRIGHT

It came out of a two-man summit meeting in the northern Italian city of Milan in January 313. The two men were the Roman emperors—Constantine ruling the West and Licinius the East. They met “under happy auspices,” as their joint communique put it. After years of power struggles for the imperial purple, the Roman world enjoyed a degree of peace. And after the failure of the Great Persecution (initiated by the emperors Diocletian and Galerius in 303–304), the Christian church had begun to recover its stability. Constantine and Licinius turned their minds to matters affecting the general welfare of the Empire.

They determined first of all to attend to “the reverence paid to the Divinity.” This required a guarantee of full religious freedom to the Christians, setting them on a par with those who followed other religions. The so-called Edict of Milan provided for this. It marks the Roman Empire’s final abandonment of the policies of persecution of Christians. The age of the martyrs was at an end. The transition to the era of the “Christian Empire” had begun.



An 8-foot-high bust of Emperor Constantine “the Great.” With his counterpart Licinius, he gave Christianity legal freedom and restored Christians’ confiscated property.

Provisions of the “Edict”

The conference at Milan undoubtedly resulted in a concordat. But its terms are known to us only from a rescript issued six months later by Licinius.

(This rescript was sent from his capital in Nicomedia—now Izmit in Turkey, just east of the Bosphorus—to the governor of the nearby province of Bithynia. The Christian writer Lactantius has preserved its original Latin, while the church historian Eusebius gives it in Greek.)

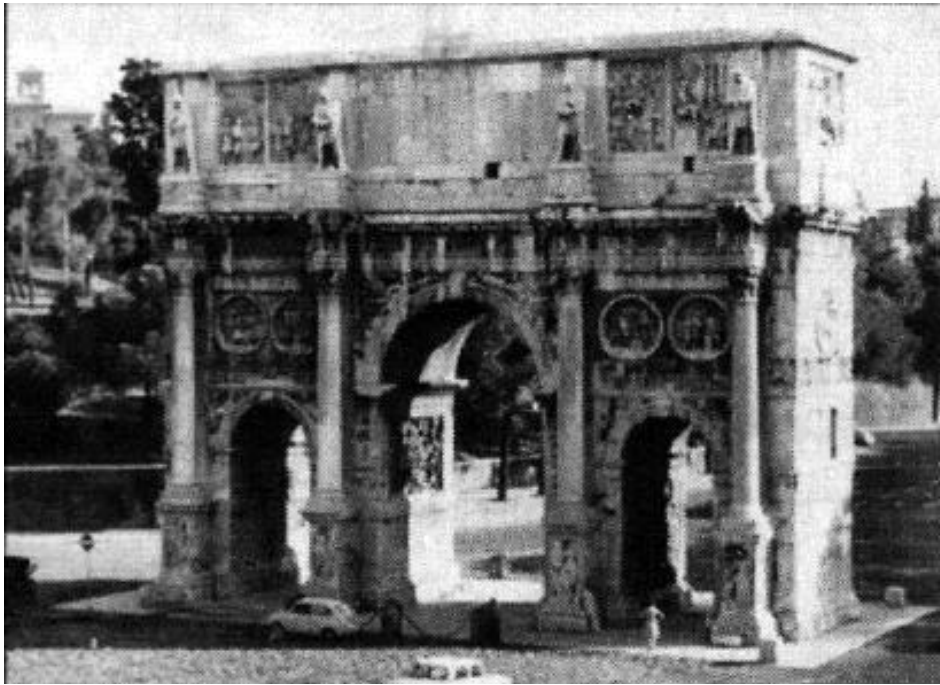
Here are the rescript's main provisions:

“Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each person has desired, whereby whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority. Therefore we thought it salutary and most proper to establish our purpose that no person whatever should be refused complete toleration, who has given up his mind either to the cult of the Christians or to the religion which he personally feels best suited to himself. It is our pleasure to abolish all conditions whatever which were embodied in former orders directed to your office about the Christians, that every one of those who have a common wish to follow the religion of the Christians may from this moment freely and unconditionally proceed to observe the same without any annoyance or disquiet.”

The rescript goes out of its way to ensure evenhanded treatment for all: “no diminution must be made from the honor of any religion.” But the strongly pro-Christian flavor is tasted in the instructions to restore to the Christians all property that had been appropriated during the persecution. This applied to property belonging to individual Christians as well as to churches—and without regard for the present owners, who could apply to the state for compensation.

In implementing these rulings the governor was to give the Christians his “most effective intervention,” making sure the terms were published to all.

These actions, Constantine and Licinius concluded, would ensure that “the Divine favor toward us, which we have already experienced in so many affairs, shall continue for all time to give us prosperity and success, together with happiness for the state.”



The Arch of Constantine, built to celebrate his decisive military victory the year before the “Edict of Milan.”

Significance of the “Edict”

In reality, the subjects of Constantine in the Western Empire already enjoyed the toleration and property rights spelled out in this rescript. Nevertheless, the “Edict’s” significance stands unchallenged (even though we must recognize the inaccuracy of its traditional title, since it was not an edict).

Only a few months earlier Constantine had become the first Roman emperor to throw in his lot with the Christians. Although the Milan summit decreed only strict parity for Christians alongside other religionists, hindsight reads between the lines and discerns the hint of things to come. Before the end of the fourth century, orthodox Christianity had become the sole official religion of the Roman Empire.

For Christianity, the changes were momentous. To this day state churches perpetuate the alignment between Christianity and the Empire worked out in the fourth century. Meanwhile, Christians in independent, “free” churches have long regarded the Constantinian revolution as little short of the fall of Christianity, almost as calamitous as the fall of Adam and Eve.

One thing is clear: The unqualified toleration for all decreed at Milan did not last long, nor has it often prevailed in later centuries. The rescript’s noble sentiments surely warrant our attention today for that reason alone.

[Wright, D. F. (1990). *The Edict of Milan (313)*. *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*.]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 41:41-57; Romans 16:1-27

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

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

PRAYER FROM THE PSALMS

From Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12, 17

Be gracious to me, O God, according to your loyal love.
According to your abundant mercies,
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and from my sin cleanse me.
Create a clean heart for me, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and with a willing spirit sustain me.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Week 2

Sunday March 10 – Saturday March 16

Memory Verse for the Week

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

Ephesians 2:4-6 (ESV)

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	-----	Sun Mar 10, 10:00am & 5:00pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Mon/Wed, 7:00am & Fri, 8:00am
Encounter	-----	Fri Mar 15, 6:00pm

Sunday March 10

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 13:1-18; Matthew 9:1-7

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF D A CARSON

*We confess, Lord God,
that in a digital world full of countless material blessings,
in a world of nuclear physics and an astonishingly fast pace,
it takes an effort to think our way through these passages. [Gen. 1-2]
But we begin to glimpse that you are the sovereign God
to whom we owe everything.
The very heart of our rebellion is the desire to be God instead of you,
to run things ourselves,
to barter with you.
We make messes that are damaging to ourselves,
to our family,
to the culture at large,
and to the relationships among nations,
everything from petty one-upmanship to racism and genocide and everything in between.*

*Yet at the heart of all of it, we confess, is this horrendous rebellion,
this idolatry that demands that we be our own gods.
Open our eyes, Lord God,
that we may see your sovereign independence,
your glory,
your patience with us so that we are not destroyed,
the way you took time across countless generations
to show what a gracious sovereign God you are
until in the fullness of time you sent your own Son
to be the Lamb of God who really does take away our sin.
Open our eyes and our hearts, Lord God,
that we may be drawn inescapably to him. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (p. 54). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – GATHERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10:00 AM AND 5:00 PM

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 8:1-22; Mark 14:1-26

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord our God,
 whose Son taught his holy apostles
 that those who would be great must first be servants,
 give to your Church this servant heart,
 that any glory we seek will be to your name
 and our triumph only in the cross of your Son.
 May no act of love come to be regarded as beneath us.
 We ask this in the name of the one who humbled himself
 to reveal your saving presence among us,
 Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 40). London: SPCK.]

Monday March 11

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 42:1-38; Matthew 26:1-30

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

The day demands that we begin in praise of you,
for the day is yours and we are yours;
we could not live the day without reference to you,
without your gifts,
without your commands.

We begin with praise,
for the gift of life,
for the gift of our life together,
for the gift of life in your world
with all your beloved creatures,
for the gift of life in your church
with your steady recital of wonders.

You, you alone, only you,
you who made and makes and remakes heaven and earth,
you who executes justice and gives food we know not how,
you who sets prisoners free and sights the blind,
you who lifts up and watches and upholds,
you who reigns forever,
you ... and therefore us.

You, except we turn to lesser trusts,
all of us with our trust in the powers,

You, except we turn to ignoble aims,
all of us preoccupied with ourselves.

You, except we invest in our little controls and our larger fears,
all of us marked by anxiety.

And then we watch as you ease us out of anxiety,
as you heal our selves turned new,
as you topple powers and bring new chances
for truthful public life.

You ... except ... but then finally, always, everywhere you ...
and us on the receiving end.

And we are grateful. Amen.

On reading Psalm 146, the day Milosovich fell in Belgrade, Campbell Seminar / October 16, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 8). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Forte, B. (2005). *To Follow You, Light of Life: Spiritual Exercises Preached before John Paul II at the Vatican*. (E. Lupieri, Ed., D. Glenday, Trans.) (p. 59). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

The Cross as the Story of the Trinity

The *via illuminativa*—proper to this second day of the exercises—now reaches its original source, the place where God speaks in silence and his darkness is brighter than light: the cross of Jesus. As we approach the mystery of the cross, we recall how in Western tradition the Trinity has often been depicted in the image of the Crucified One sustained by the hands of the Father, while the dove of the Spirit separates and unites the abandoned Jesus and the One who has “abandoned” him (see, for example, Masaccio’s *Trinity* in the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence and the motif of the “Throne of Grace”—*Gnadenstuhl*—in the German tradition). This image is the translation into visual terms of the profound theological idea that perceives the cross as the place where the Trinity is revealed to us. That the cross tells of the Trinity was understood very early on by the infant church, as is shown not only by the considerable space dedicated to the accounts of the passion in the first proclamation of the gospel but also by the theological structure underpinning the passion narratives. This structure can be identified in the constant and certainly not accidental recurrence of the verb “to hand over” (*paradidōmi*); charting the various appearances of this verb will allow us to identify two fundamental ways in which Jesus is handed over.

The first has to do with the way the Son of Man is handed over by human beings. His love is betrayed, and he is handed over to his adversaries: “Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them” (*hina auton paradoi*: Mark 14:10). In its turn the Sanhedrin, guardian and representative of the law, hands the “blasphemer” over to Caesar’s representative: “As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate” (*paredōkan Pilatō*: Mark 15:1). Pilate, while convinced of the Prisoner’s innocence—“What evil has he done?” (v. 14)—yields to the pressure of the mob incited by the leaders (cf. v. 11): “After flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified” (*paredōken ton Iēsoun*: v. 15). Abandoned by all, Jesus is alone in living his exodus from himself till the last. If this were the end, though, his death would be just one more of history’s unjust executions, with an innocent person crying out in the face of the world’s injustice. The early Christian community knows, instead, that this is *not* the case; that is why this community recounts a second fundamental way in which Jesus is handed over, a mysterious threefold way.

The first of these is when the Son hands over his own self. Paul puts it clearly: “The life I live now in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*paradontos heauton hyper emou*: Gal. 2:20; cf. Eph. 5:2). The Son hands himself over to his Father for love of us and in our place: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Handing himself over like this, the Crucified One takes upon himself the burden of the world’s suffering and sin; he journeys to the frontiers of furthest exile from God, so as to make the exile of sinners his own, in the self-offering and reconciliation of Easter. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13–14). The cry of the dying Jesus expresses the extreme of suffering and exile, which the Son desired to make his own, so as to journey to the furthest outposts of the world’s sorrow, and lead this sorrow to reconciliation with the Father: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; cf. Matt. 27:46).

The second part of this mysterious threefold way is this: in addition to the fact that the Son handed himself over is the fact that the Father, too, handed him over. This emerges from the use of the so-called “divine passive.” “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands and they will kill him” (Mark 9:31 and parallels; cf. 10:33–45 and parallels; Mark 14:41–42 = Matt. 26:45b–46). It is not merely human beings, into whose hands Jesus is consigned, that hand him

over; neither is it he alone who does this, since the verb here is in the passive. It will be God, his Father, who will hand him over: he “who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us” (Rom. 8:32). In the Father’s giving up of his own Son for us in this way, he manifests the depths of his love: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10; cf. Rom. 5:6–11). The cross reveals that “God [the Father] is love” (1 John 4:8–16)!

To the suffering of the Son, there thus corresponds the suffering of the Father: God suffers on the cross as the Father who offers, as the Son who offers himself, and as the Spirit, the love that comes forth from their suffering love. The cross is the story of God the Trinity’s love for the world, a love that does not simply bear suffering, but chooses it. While the Greeks and Romans could conceive only of a suffering that is imposed, borne passively, and consequently imperfect, a suffering that thus calls for a theory of divine impassibility, the Christian God reveals a suffering that is active, freely chosen, and perfect with the perfection of love: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). The God of Jesus is not a stranger to the world’s pain, a passive spectator from the heights of his immutable perfection. He is in the deepest sense God-with-us, suffering with all who suffer and coming to our aid by being near us in the cross of his Son. Thus is the heart of God revealed: the Father suffers because he has created us out of love, exposing himself freely to the risk of our freedom, and he loves even sinners in the Only-Begotten One, who made himself one with us. Precisely thus, he is the compassionate God, the Father who suffers with whoever suffers, mysteriously watching over the meaning of human suffering in the depths of his love.

Story of the Son and story of the Father, the cross is no less the story of the Spirit: the supreme act of self-giving is the sacrificial offering of the Spirit, as John the evangelist perceived: “Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (*paredōken to pneuma*: John 19:30). This is the third part of the mysterious threefold way in which Jesus was handed over. In the hour of the cross, the Crucified One gives up to the Father the very Spirit the Father has first given him, the Spirit he will receive again in fullness on the day of the resurrection. Good Friday, when the Son hands himself over to the Father, and when the Father gives the Son up to death for sinners, is also the day when the Spirit is handed over by the Son to the Father, so that the Son may be abandoned, far from God, in the company of sinners. Just as, for Israel, exile was the time when the Spirit was taken away, so when the crucified Jesus hands the Spirit over to the Father he enters into exile without God; and just as for the prophets the messianic homeland will be the place where the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (cf. Joel 2:28–29), so the pouring out of the Spirit on the Son at Easter (cf. Rom. 1:4) will allow the sinners with whom he has made himself one to enter with him into the communion of eternal life in God. When viewed in the light of this handing over of the Spirit, the cross appears to us in all its radicality as a Trinitarian and saving event: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Rom. 8:3).

Story of the Son, of the Father, and of the Spirit, the cross is the story of God the Trinity. Out of love, the Persons of the Trinity take to themselves the exile of the world subjected to sin, in order that this exile may enter at Easter into the home of Trinitarian communion. Precisely thus we are allowed to catch a glimpse of a mystery of suffering in the depths of the Godhead ...

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 43:1-34; Philippians 1:1-30

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call a rich tapestry of people to follow you
and challenge us with a new commandment
to imitate your love.

Give to us the gift of your grace
to fulfil this calling with joy and gladness,
that the world may rejoice in your praise.

Make us one as you are one
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
eternal Trinity, now and for ever. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 43). London: SPCK.]

Tuesday March 12

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 44:1-34; Matthew 26:31-56

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Suffer me therefore, O Lord Jesus Christ,
to gaze on Thy unspeakable mercy,
and to tell abroad Thy sweetness and goodness
towards the sinful and the wretched.
I have said it already, but O, it delights me much,
whenever fit occasion offers,
to make remembrance of Thy sweetness
and Thy grace to sinners,
and to say how great they are.
For, out of love for sinners and for their redemption—
not merely sinners who are sinners more or less,
but sinners who are sinful beyond measure, if only they repent—
Thou camest down from the Bosom of the Father,
Thou didst enter the Virgin's womb,
didst take true flesh of her,
and living in the world didst call all sinners to penance,
at last didst endure the gibbet of the Cross for them,
and dying thus according to the flesh,
didst restore to them the life which by their sin they had justly lost.
Therefore, when I consider the evil deeds that I have done,
I am sure that I shall be lost,
if Thou shouldst please to judge me according to my deserts;
but, when I consider that death of Thine
which Thou didst undergo for the redemption of sinners,
I do not despair of Thy mercy. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 77–78). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – VIDEO

Watch this short video and spend some time in contemplation of what you've learned.

thebibleproject.com/explore/image-god

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

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

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 45:1-15; Philippians 2:1-30

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
on the mountain top you gave your disciples
the great commission
to continue your work of reconciliation
and to draw all people to you,
to baptize and teach them in your way.
Bless us who are sent in your name.
Give us your grace
to be open to the questions that struggle to find expression,
the thirst that is unsure where to be refreshed
and the hunger that is scared to ask for bread.
Guide us as we seek to uncover the path of life and peace.
Shield us from the pride of disdain and contempt
that would think itself better than anyone else,
for all are equal in your sight,
and the treasure for which you died;
to the glory of the Father, through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 46). London: SPCK.]

Wednesday March 13

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 45:16-46:7; Matthew 26:57-75

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER HYMN BUILT ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Thy kingdom come, O God
Thy rule, O Christ, begin!
Break with Thine iron rod
The tyranny of sin
Where is Thy reign of peace
And purity and love?
When shall all hatred cease
As in the realms above?

When comes the promised time
That war shall be no more?
Oppression, lust and crime
Shall flee Thy face before
We pray Thee, Lord, arise
And come in Thy great might
Revive our longing eyes
Which languish in Thy sight.

[Cross, T. J. E. (2003). *How to Pray: Lessons from the Lord's Prayer* (pp. 27–28). Belfast, Northern Ireland; Greenville, SC: Ambassador.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK



Dirk Walker, *If it be Your Will, Take this from Me*, oil on canvas, c. 2015

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." – Mark 14:35-36

This painting captures well the multi-faceted emotion of that evening. We read in the Gospel accounts that Jesus wrestled with intense inner turmoil as he prayed to his Heavenly Father in the garden, and the bold, loose brush strokes and moody colours seem to emphasize this. Yet this painting also radiates peace. As He enters into deep communion with God, Jesus is awash with a heavenly glow from above; splashes of gold grace the rocks and trees around Him. His eyes and hands are lifted to Heaven as He speaks to and hears from God.

1. Take time to soak in the heavenly communion portrayed in this painting. Next, reflect on your own prayer life. What are you doing well? What could improve?
2. When you wrestle with hard things in your life, whether daily troubles or larger concerns, do you take them to God? Are you listening for His voice?
3. Jesus submits to his Father even when asked to make the ultimate sacrifice. When in your life have you felt called to make some sort of personal sacrifice? How did you react, and what were the consequences?

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 46:26-47:12; Philippians 3:1-21

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord,
your Spirit sends apostles
to all points of the compass,
and you draw people of all races and nations
into one family in your Church.
Broaden our horizons to learn from one another,
expand our generosity to support one another,
increase our vision to pray for one another,
that united as joint heirs of your grace
the whole earth may resound
with your praise and glory,
through Jesus Christ,
who is our true peace. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 49). London: SPCK.]

Thursday March 14

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

God sovereign and generous,
who commands the rise and fall of the nations,
who calls and has chosen many peoples,
who weeps when they harm each other,
who haunts every local culture—including ours—
with your will for well-being,
who draws close to the powerless and
surprises with power via weakness ...

You are the one whom we praise in astonishment,
we adore in gladness,
we thank in gratitude ...

for who you are,
for what you do,
for how you hope.

Look with mercy on us this day,
on all the churches we serve and love,
on all the people we name,
on all the communities so fragile in which
we are embedded.

Look with your mercy, and we will obey you all the day long.

In the name of Jesus who obeyed fully. Amen.

On reading Isaiah 19:23–25, lecture by Thomas Thangaraj / October 11, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 10). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Hoezee, S. (1998). *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (pp. 17–24). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

In Supremely Good Order

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:3

And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so.

Genesis 1:6

In the beginning God. He alone is supreme. He is not hushed or shut up by chaos. And so, starting in verse 3, God speaks the cosmos into being. God continues to speak through six “days” of creation, and each day highlights various aspects of God’s order, supremacy, and delightful blessing of the creation’s wild abundance of life. Short of making a thorough commentary on each

verse in Genesis 1, we can pause at certain junctures in the text to retrieve some of this passage's deepest theological and most comforting pastoral truths.

First, God's divine speech brings a profound order to the creation. Notice how often the word *separate* occurs in Genesis 1. Several times we read how God separates waters from waters, separates darkness from light, separates waters from dry ground. Why is this important? Because it tells us that in the midst of chaos, God was carving out cosmos. God is in charge, pushing back chaos, removing at will the threats to *shalom* (peace). God is in charge, taking care of us tenderly by making a world that will be safe and secure.

For that same reason it is significant to note that on the second day of creation, as recorded in verses 6–8, nothing new is created. Day two is a day of merely moving things around, of organization and reorganization, of separating water from water to make oceans and sky. Again, the pastoral significance is to assure us that God is in charge, carefully, thoughtfully, and intentionally ordering a cosmos of *shalom* for all his creatures.

Second, the author of Genesis skillfully reveals God's supremacy through the sequence in which God creates the universe's splendors. On the first day, God creates light, but he is not said to make a sun or any stars. He just makes light. Here the author is sending a clear message to anyone tempted to worship the sun, moon, or stars. For Genesis tells us that the universe's true God is so great he makes light without the aid of any proximate sources of illumination. God is the original dazzler, the first cosmic source of light and of all the life it gives.

Indeed, the sun and stars are not created until the fourth day, yet plants and vegetation begin to grow on the third day. We know green plants need the sun and the process of photosynthesis to grow—even ancient peoples, though lacking our more complete knowledge of plant chemistry, knew that without sunlight plants do not grow. But the author of Genesis wants us to recognize that God is the true source of all life and growth. The true God is so great he can make plants grow without the sun—just the loving gaze of God makes things come alive.

Whenever I ponder this idea, I am reminded of a scene from the movie *E. T.: The Extraterrestrial*. In this story we meet gentle aliens from outer space who are botanists and horticulturalists, visiting earth to collect plant specimens. These creatures are experts in making plants grow. At one point in the film the alien E. T. sees a pot of flowers withering and wilting in a darkened room. So he gazes intently at the plant, widening his eyes in intensity, and the plant stands up straight, new color and life infusing each petal of every flower. When E. T. walks away, the flowers are once again in glorious, full bloom.

Long before God creates the sun, he gazes at the green vegetation and colorful flowers he has made. As he stares lovingly at these living creatures, he widens his eyes and intensifies his divine gaze only to have the plants bloom and flourish in the warmth of his sight. God, the author of Genesis is telling us, is life itself.

By the fourth day, when God gets around to making the sun, it is almost anticlimactic. The real wonder becomes not the sun but the fact that we already had light and growth without the sun! Verse 16 contains a wonderful line: "He also made the stars." Here is a classic example of dramatic understatement. Quintillions of nuclear furnaces pierce the darkness of outer space, spewing the heat, light, and radiation of their hydrogen-helium fission. But the author mentions it in passing, as though God hardly broke a sweat in creating these bright wonders. In the beginning God. Enough said.

Divine Play

God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ... [And] God blessed them.

Genesis 1:20, 22a

Third, let us consider Genesis's consistent presentation of God's blessing of his wildly fruitful creation. For on days five and six things really get rolling. God creates an abundance of exuberant life, making a world teeming with creatures of all kinds. One Hebrew expert notes that verse 20 legitimately could be paraphrased, "And God made the earth swarm with swarming swarms of creatures!" The language shows God's piling up the creatures on the earth. ...

The Rescue of Creation

Before we complete our look at Genesis, we must note the darker element of the Bible's opening chapters: the advent of human sin. The Bible's delightful portrait of God's exuberant creation continues for just two chapters only to be interrupted by Adam and Eve's fall. Already in Genesis 3 we see introduced what must become the Bible's second major theme: redemption.

Earlier in this chapter we noted how the theme of creation frequently gets eclipsed by redemption. However, it is clear from the Bible itself that one cannot consider the theme of redemption without thinking also about creation. For the creation is what is redeemed. The God who lovingly made and who still adores this entire cosmos has no interest in redeeming us out of this universe but instead saves the creation so as to remake it into a fitting, well-ordered home—a cosmos, the nature of which we see in Genesis.

One of Scripture's earliest indications of the earthly nature of salvation comes in the Bible's second book, Exodus. As Terrence Fretheim has brilliantly noted, the Book of Exodus not only follows Genesis, it is clearly intended by the biblical authors to be a sequel to Genesis—as part 2 of the story that began when God said, "Let there be light." Seen this way Exodus becomes not simply a local, limited story of the nation of Israel's rescue from Egypt but a cosmic story through which God is redeeming the entire creation.

As Fretheim points out, creation themes from Genesis crop up again and again in the story of the exodus. One of the more prominent of such themes is rescue from the waters of chaos. As Genesis 1 makes clear, one of God's principal acts in the creation was putting the dreadful waters of chaos in their place. Hence, one of the worst fallouts of evil's presence in our world—as seen best in the flood story—is that God's creation barriers are eroded, cracked, and sometimes removed altogether. The primordial waters of chaos sometimes slip out of place and so threaten this creation's life and flourishing. God created this cosmos by pushing back the deep waters of precreation chaos. Now that evil has come, we need to be rescued out of those waters of chaos once again.

So in the Book of Exodus, when the baby Moses is rescued out of the waters of the Nile River—in which so many Israelite babies were being brutally drowned—we hear echoes of the creation story. When the Israelites are snatched out of the clutches of the Egyptian army by being led through the Red Sea on dry ground, we see a story of re-creation as God once again pushes back the waters of chaos so as to carve out a safe niche of cosmos for his people. In both of these stories we also see a foreshadowing of the New Testament practice of baptism—in Christ we are safely brought through the waters of destruction and so become "new creations" through the cleansing tide of the Lamb's shed blood. The apostle Paul makes this connection explicitly when he writes to the Corinthians, "Our forefathers were all under the cloud and ... they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1–2).

It is significant to note that in Exodus, when God fights Pharaoh—who clearly represents the complete anticreation forces of death and chaos—the weapons God uses are the weapons of creation. The plagues of bloody rivers, flies, gnats, darkness, frogs, and hail all make clear that this creation is the stage for salvation; the creation is the place where salvation takes place because the creation is the very object of salvation.

That is why, following the exodus, the rest of the Bible's images for salvation center on the created world. To what does God finally lead his people following their rescue from Egypt? To a good *land* filled to overflowing with abundances of every kind. As Fretheim puts it, "Redemption is in the service of creation, a creation that God purposes for all. Because God is a God of life and blessing, God will do redemptive work should those gifts be endangered. *The objective of God's work in redemption is to free people to be what they were created to be.* It is a deliverance, not from the world, but to true life in the world" (emphasis in original).

Similarly, Larry Rasmussen notes that in the Old Testament, redemptive events always center on the creation. God shows up in a bush, in a spring, in an earthquake, on a mountaintop, in the wind. The primary ritual for ancient Israel was that of sacrifice in which the firstfruits of the creation are offered up to God. Religion in the Old Testament frequently seems hard to distinguish from good highlands agriculture, from proper treatment of topsoil and animals, from joyful celebration over bountiful harvests and the warm glow one gets from a goblet of fine wine.

As Rasmussen says, the reason the prophets ultimately predict our beating swords into plowshares is not only to end bloody warfare on the earth but also to enable us to return to our true calling: earthkeeping, tending the garden of God's creation! Considering what we learned in this chapter about the tender, delightful ways by which God made and now preserves this creation, it is finally unsurprising to discover the rest of the Bible showing God working himself literally to death to redeem that creation. This universe is too good to let go.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 48:1-22; Philippians 4:1-23

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Spirit of God,
strengthen me in the darkness of this hour.
Purify my heart that I may know my need
for your forgiveness and mercy.
Surround me with your protection
that no evil may assault my soul,
but I may trust in your prevailing goodness.
For the darkness is not dark to you
and the night is as bright as the day.
Let your light flood the shadows and hidden places,
bringing stillness and peace to all that is troubled,
in Jesus Christ, our risen, ascended and glorified Lord. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 69). London: SPCK.]

Friday March 15

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation. Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds." Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Redeemer and Saviour, 'Draw me after Thee.
Let not the world's charms entice me,
 but the sweetness of Thine own most blessed love allure me.
Time was I was drawn by my own vanity;
 but now let Thy truth draw me,
 draw me after Thee.
Draw me, for Thou hast drawn;
 keep me, for Thou hast laid hold of me.
Thou didst draw me to redeem,
 draw me to save.
Thou didst draw me in Thy pity,
 draw me to Thy bliss.
Thou didst lay hold of me, appearing among us made Man for us;
 keep me,
 keep me, now that Thou rulest over heaven exalted above the angels.
It is Thy word,
Thy promise.
Thou hast promised, saying: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
 will draw all things to Myself' (St. John 12:32).
Draw me now, therefore,
Thou so mightily exalted,
 even as Thou hast allured me, so compassionately humbled. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (p. 14). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – MUSIC

Meditate and reflect on [Impact](#) as sung by Chris Tomlin (available on youtube.com). Listen to the song a couple of times, leaving space in between to reflect and pray as the Lord leads you.

Humbly I wait
Here in Your presence
Oh, how I need You
Quiet my soul
I long for Your whisper
Oh, how I need You

Jesus, Jesus
As I worship in surrender
I feel Heaven drawing closer
As I lay down my defenses
Your love invades
And I brace for the impact
I am undone
Lost in Your glory
Oh, how I love You
Covered in grace
Found in Your mercy
Oh, how I love You
As I worship in surrender
I feel Heaven drawing closer
As I lay down my defenses
Your love invades
And I brace for the impact
I brace for the impact
Love like a mighty river, like a rushing wind
Sweeps through me, right through me
Love like a thousand oceans, like a symphony
Sweeps through me, right through me
As I worship in surrender
I feel Heaven drawing closer
As I lay down my defenses
Oh, Your love invades
And I brace for the impact
Love like a mighty river, like a rushing wind
Sweeps through me, right through me
Love like a thousand oceans, like a symphony
Sweeps through me, right through me
Right through me
(Christopher Tomlin / Mitch Wong / Tommy Christer Sjostrom)

End by using this song as part of your prayer and consider these words throughout your day.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 49:33-50:26; Colossians 1:1-20

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

God, who led the children of Israel through the wilderness
by a cloud by day and a fire by night,
guide us in our earthly pilgrimage.
Inspire us with your truth,
direct us in your justice
and keep us from losing our way in word and deed.
Bring us to the goal of your promise
where blessing finds fulfilment and hope is complete;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 136). London: SPCK.]

Saturday March 16

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 1:1-14, 1:22-2:10; Matthew 27:57-66

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF DA CARSON

*We rejoice, heavenly Father, in the truth that Jesus rose from the dead.
Yet we begin to see that this is not simply a truth in the public arena of history
to be absorbed quickly
and then set to one side.
For if indeed your dear Son,
the God-man,
rose from the dead,
then everything is changed.
His victory over death is confirmed.
The sacrifice he provided has been vindicated.
Already he is the head of a new humanity
that will one day share in his resurrection-likeness.
And his people, heavenly Father, rejoice to bow before him and cry,
“My Lord and my God.”
Grant that each one who reads these pages may cry,
“Forgive my sin as you forgave the sin of that paralyzed man,
my Lord and my God.”
In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* (p. 167). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – HISTORY

The First Council of Nicea (325)

*At stake in the church’s first general council was the simplest, yet most profound,
question: Who is Jesus Christ?*

by BRUCE L. SHELLEY

July 4, 325, was a memorable day. About three hundred Christian bishops and deacons from the eastern half of the Roman Empire had come to Nicea, a little town near the Bosphorus Straits flowing between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

In the conference hall where they waited was a table. On it lay an open copy of the Gospels.

The emperor, Constantine the Great, entered the hall in his imperial, jewel-encrusted, multicolored brocades, but out of respect for the Christian leaders, without his customary train of soldiers. Constantine spoke only briefly. He told the churchmen they had to come to some agreement on the crucial questions dividing them. “Division in the church,” he said, “is worse than war.”

A New Day

The bishops and deacons were deeply impressed. After three centuries of periodic persecutions instigated by some Roman emperor, were they actually gathered before one not as

enemies but as allies? Some of them carried scars of the imperial lash. One pastor from Egypt was missing an eye; another was crippled in both hands as a result of red-hot irons.

But Constantine had dropped the sword of persecution in order to take up the cross. Just before a decisive battle in 312, he had converted to Christianity.

Nicea symbolized a new day for Christianity. The persecuted followers of the Savior dressed in linen had become the respected advisers of emperors robed in purple. The once-despised religion was on its way to becoming the state religion, the spiritual cement of a single society in which public and private life were united under the control of Christian doctrine.

If Christianity were to serve as the cement of the Empire, however, it had to hold one faith. So the emperors called for church councils like Nicea, paid the way for bishops to attend, and pressed church leaders for doctrinal unity. The age of Christian emperors was an age of creeds; and creeds were the instruments of conformity.



The Council of Nicea, summoned by Emperor Constantine and held in the imperial palace under his auspices. Constantine viewed the Arian teachings—that Jesus was a created being subordinate to God—as an “insignificant” theological matter.

But he wanted peace in the Empire he had just united through force. When diplomatic letters failed to solve the dispute, he convened around 220 bishops, who met for two months to hammer out a universally acceptable definition of Jesus Christ.

A Troubling Question

We can see this imperial pressure at work at Nicea, the first general council of the church. The problem that Constantine expected the bishops to solve was the dispute over Arianism.

Arius, pastor of the influential Baucalis Church in Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Christ was more than human but something less than God. He said that God originally lived alone and had no Son. Then he created the Son, who in turn created everything else. The idea persists in some cults today.

Arius made faith in Christ understandable, especially when he put his teaching in witty rhymes set to catchy tunes. Even the dockhands on the wharves at Alexandria could hum the ditties while unloading fish.

Arius's teaching held a special appeal for many recent converts to Christianity. It was like the pagan religions of their childhood: the one supreme God, who dwells alone, makes a number of lesser gods who do God's work, passing back and forth from heaven to earth. These former pagans found it hard to understand the Christian belief that Christ, the Divine Word, existed from all eternity, and that he is equal to the Almighty Father. So Arianism spread, creating Constantine's concern.

Once the Council of Nicea convened, many of the bishops were ready to compromise. One young deacon from Alexandria, however, was not. Athanasius, with the support of his bishop, Alexander, insisted that Arius's doctrine left Christianity without a divine Savior. He called for a creed that made clear Jesus Christ's full deity.

In the course of the debate, the most learned bishop present, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (a friend and admirer of the emperor and a half-hearted supporter of Arius), put forward his own creed—perhaps as evidence of his questioned orthodoxy.

Most of the pastors, however, recognized that something more specific was needed to exclude the possibility of Arian teaching. For this purpose they produced another creed, probably from Palestine. Into it they inserted an extremely important series of phrases: "True God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father...."

The expression *homo ousion*, "one substance," was probably introduced by Bishop Hosius of Cordova (in today's Spain). Since he had great influence with Constantine, the imperial weight was thrown to that side of the scales.

After extended debate, all but two bishops at the council agreed upon a creed that confessed faith "in one Lord Jesus Christ, ... true God of true God." Constantine was pleased, thinking the issue was settled.

An Unsettled Issue

As it turned out, however, Nicea alone settled little. For the next century the Nicene and the Arian views of Christ battled for supremacy. First Constantine and then his successors stepped in again and again to banish this churchman or exile that one. Control of church offices too often depended on control of the emperor's favor.

The lengthy struggle over imperial power and theological language culminated in the mid-fifth century at the Council at Chalcedon in Asia Minor (today's Turkey). There the church fathers concluded that Jesus was completely and fully God. And finally, the council confessed that this total man and this total God was one completely normal person. In other words, Jesus combined two natures, human and divine, in one person.

This classical, orthodox affirmation from Chalcedon made it possible to tell the story of Jesus as good news. Since Jesus was a normal human being, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, he could fulfill every demand of God's moral law, and he could suffer and die a real death. Since he was truly God, his death was capable of satisfying divine justice. God himself had provided the sacrifice.

The Council of Nicea, then, laid the cornerstone for the orthodox understanding of Jesus Christ. That foundation has stood ever since.

[Shelley, B. L. (1990). The First Council of Nicea (325). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*.]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 2:11-22; Colossians 1:21-2:7

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Risen Lord,
behind closed doors
you turned Thomas's doubt
into a shout of faith.
Take our questioning minds
and make them a gateway
to hope and trust in you,
that faith may seek and find understanding
in your mysterious purposes and will;
for your honour and glory. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 147). London: SPCK.]

Week 3

Sunday March 17 – Saturday March 23

Memory Verse for the Week

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

Jeremiah 31:10-11 (ESV)

- ¹⁰ “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far
away;
say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather
him,
and will keep him as a shepherd keeps
his flock.’
- ¹¹ **For the LORD has ransomed Jacob
and has redeemed him from hands too
strong for him.**

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	-----	Sun Mar 17, 10:00am & 5:00pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Mon/Wed, 7:00am & Fri, 8:00am
Joseph, Guardian of Jesus	-----	Tue Mar 19, 6:00pm
Encounter	-----	Fri Mar 22, 6:00pm

Sunday March 17

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 18:1-15; Luke 15:11-32

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

The witnesses tell us that your promises persist
and will come to fruition;
We find that retelling of such promises deeply compelling
in our own lives.
You are the God who reached our family not yet formed.
You uttered promise and sent father Abraham on his daring way.
You assured mother Sarah of impossibility
and sent her laughing in disbelief.
You hoped them to new land,
and since have been giving sons and daughters and
futures and possibilities,
beyond all that we can hope or imagine.
We are the glad carriers and recipients of those promises.
We live each time from the trace of your future
that keeps surprising us with
gifts and chances and hopes.
But your promises seem so flimsy, so risky, so unsure.
We keep fashioning better guarantees.
We lie a little here and cheat a little there.
We add our own securities,
and then find that every land of promise
becomes a turf of killing dispute.
The promise fades; it feels more like we are on our own.
So do this yet today. Match the goodness of your promise
with the daring of our faith.
Let us trust beyond seeing,
risk beyond laughing,
yield beyond calculating.
By supper time give us the freedom that belongs to your “Yes,”
Your “Yes” we have seen fleshed in glad obedience. Amen.

On pondering promises / July 13, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 34).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – GATHERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10:00 AM AND 5:00 PM

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 9:1-15; Mark 14:27-52

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany)

God, which knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers,
that for man's frailness we cannot always stand uprightly;
Grant to us the health of body and soul
that all those things which we suffer for sin,
by thy help we may well pass and overcome;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 22). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Monday March 18

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 2:23-3:22; John 1:1-28

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

And now I return to Thee,
most sweet Creator and most kind Redeemer,
who hast made me and remade me;
and with lowly prayers I supplicate Thy pity,
that Thou wouldest teach my heart to consider with life-giving fear and salutary alarms,
in how loathsome and deplorable plight my flesh must be given over after death
a prey to worms and putrefaction,
bereft of the breath that now inspires it.

Where then will be the beauty, if any it have, of which it boasts now?

Where the exquisite delights it revels in?

Where its pampered limbs?

Will not the prophet's word then have its true fulfilment:

‘All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field’? (Is. 40:6.) ...

The whole frame and structure of the body,

for the health,

the comfort,

and the pleasure of which almost every thought stands minister,

will be dissolved into putrefaction and the worm,

and last of all, vile dust.

Where *then* the proud neck?

Where the ornaments,

the dress,

the varied dainties?

They are vanished, and gone like a dream;

gone all of them,

never to return;

and I, their poor, poor votary,

left behind. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 30–31). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Hindson, E. E. (1999). *God is There in the Tough Times* (pp. 120–125). Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers.

Recognizing Our Purpose and Place

The Bible tells us that God was in perfect fellowship with Himself in eternity past (Genesis 1:26). Man was created to have fellowship with God (Genesis 2:7), yet God said: “It is not good that man should be alone ...” (Genesis 2:18 NKJV). Therefore, God created woman to be a suitable

helper or partner for man. They were to live in fellowship with each other and with God. What's more, God also gave us the church, which is designed to help us build up one another.

Position. As believers, our position in God's eyes never varies: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:27–29 NASB).

In Romans 8:35–39, we are told that nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Sometimes, though, a coolness creeps into our relationship with God. We feel distant, isolated from Him. Eventually we wonder, Perhaps God doesn't love me anymore. If this is so, then your problem is not one of position (that never varies), but relationship. Ask yourself how things stand between you and the Lord. Is there anything you've tried to keep hidden from Him? Have you sought daily fellowship with Him?

Purpose. All of us desire to have a sense of purpose in life. Many people, especially younger people, go through a time of confusion: They don't know who they are or where they're going. What they really have encountered is a crisis of purpose. Often they declare they can find little meaning to life. They turn to others, asking, "What's the true reason for living?" Quite likely, the apostle Paul went through just such a stage in his younger days before he met Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:8, however, we see a man ardently pursuing the true goal of his life: "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I might gain Christ" (NASB). As God's children, we can be confident that our lives have definite purpose.

People. God has created His children to have fellowship with one another. The body of Christ serves many purposes, and one of the most important is to provide an avenue of support, encouragement, and emotional closeness. These are elements sought by the emotionally starved soul. If you are lonely, you owe it to yourself to step out and seek more contact with other human beings. Whether it is volunteering for a community project, taking an arts-and-crafts class, or joining a fellowship group at the church, interpersonal contact is a potent weapon against loneliness. "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NASB).

Pleasure. One of the most common causes of loneliness is self-neglect—that is, neglecting our own soul's need for laughter and enjoyment. The Bible speaks often of the importance of laughter; loneliness and discouragement are seen as enemies of God's regenerative work within His people. Proverbs 13:12 describes this need for enjoyment: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life." Legitimate fun nourishes the soul; get out there and find some things you really enjoy doing. Do them regularly, and take a friend along if you can.

Pause. One little-known but very common cause of loneliness in the hectic fast-paced world we live in comes, believe it or not, from avoiding one's own company. Christ understood this well. At intervals, He withdrew to solitary places to reexamine His life and commune with God. Matthew 14:23 says, "After He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone" (Matthew 14:23 NASB).

For a Christian, times set aside for meditation and prayer are really indispensable. There is a certain nourishment the soul requires that is available only in those quiet times of self-reflection and intimacy, which the Christian enjoys with God through the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit. One of the shortcomings of the modern-day church is its lack of emphasis on personal worship and communion with God in the secret closets of our life. When this time of personal intimacy with God is in short supply, one of the symptoms the soul may manifest is an emotional sense of loneliness. The cure is to take a few hours during the next week for some real quality time in prayer and meditation with the Lord.

A Powerful Promise

Loneliness is a mental attitude. If we are living in fellowship with God, we are never really alone. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Just before His Ascension, Jesus declared, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). This promise climaxes Jesus’ Great Commission. He has sent us out to preach the gospel to the entire world in the assurance of His continuing presence.

Over the centuries, that promise has sustained many a beleaguered saint. We never really face the problems of life alone because Christ lives in us. He is ever present in the soul of the believer. Loneliness comes only when we lose sight of that truth. Christ promised that He would send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18, 26). Through the Spirit, we have peace and reassurance that Christ lives within us. A lonely Christian, therefore, is one who has forgotten who he is. He has forgotten that he is a child of the King, and instead begins to live like an outcast. He has set down his spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10–18) and is wide open to attack. Forgetting his Lord’s victory, he is already preparing for defeat. He is living as though God were dead!

Loneliness is a self-inflicted bitterness. It is the belief that God is not near and does not care about us. What really complicates the problem is that we know such thoughts are not true! We know in our heart that we are not alone; we are indwelt by the Spirit of God. We are “partakers of the divine nature”(2 Peter 1:4). Our life is co-eternal with the life of God! When we feel alone, it is because we are distracting ourselves from the source of all meaning and purpose in life—God ... our Creator, Sustainer, and Companion.

No, Never Alone!

As Christians, we are never really alone. Christ is always present in our lives through His indwelling Spirit. We can end up *feeling* alone when we see ourselves as victims of circumstance rather than victorious children of the living God.

Loneliness comes when we fail to live in personal fellowship with Christ on a daily basis. If He is really alive and risen from the dead, why should we ever feel alone? Because a boyfriend dropped you? Because your wife died? Because a close friend moved away? Because of a lost job? No. While there will be pain and we will miss what was in our life before, we will never feel alone because God lives within us!

We are joint heirs of Jesus Christ, who lives within us. We share in all that He is, all that He has. He has given us His righteousness and seated us with Him on His eternal throne! He has made you a child of God with an inheritance in heaven! He has done for you everything you could never have done for yourself!

God’s continual daily presence in us will sustain us through all the hard times of life. We are not out on the road of life pushing, shoving, and struggling to succeed all by ourself. The Christian life is far more than a struggle to survive; it is a dynamic and exciting daily personal encounter with the living God!

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 4:1-23; Colossians 2:8-3:11

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(For the Sunday called Septuagesima – *i.e.* the 7th before Easter)

Lord, we beseech thee favorably to hear the prayers of thy people;
that we which are justly punished for our offenses,
may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness,
for the glory of thy name,
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the holy ghost
now and ever. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 26). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Tuesday March 19

Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

Attend the Eucharist Service at 6 pm tonight in the Prayer Chapel

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 4:27-6:1; John 1:29-51

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

God has spoken by His Word and Spirit. Take His Word and bask in it (like lying in the sun). Let it take hold of your soul. Rest in it. Let it release, mold, change, correct, refresh.

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation. Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds." Listen.

A PRAYER OF D A CARSON

*Open our eyes, Lord God,
so that we can see the eternal significance
of the glorious gospel of Christ.
Help us to see that the terrors found in this world,
the threats and torments
displayed often enough across the history of the world,
are nothing compared to the wrath of the Lamb.
We face a choice:
either we will live our lives frightened of people
and what they think,
people who at most can do a little damage to us in this world,
or we will live our lives in submissive fear of him who can destroy body and soul in hell—
and justly so.
O Lord God, help us to turn to our only escape,
to him who bore our sin with its guilt and penalty
in his own body on the tree
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
Help us to sing with that old converted slave trader, John Newton,*

*I saw One hanging on a tree
In agony and blood;
He fixed His loving eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.*

*My conscience felt and owned the guilt
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And helped to nail Him there.*

*A second look He gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive:
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou may'st live."*

*Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon, too.*

*O can it be, upon a tree,
The Savior died for me?
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled,
To think He died for me!*

Lord God, be merciful to me, a sinner. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (p. 211). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – VIDEO

Watch this short video and spend some time in contemplation of what you've learned.

thebibleproject.com/explore/bad-word-series → watch the “sin” video

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 6:2-13, 7:1-7; Colossians 3:12-4:1

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(For the Sunday called Quinquagesima – i.e. the 5th before Easter)

O Lord which dost teach us
that all our doings without charity are nothing worth;
send thy holy ghost,
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity,
the very bond of peace and all virtues,
without the which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee:
Grant this for thy only son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 30). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Wednesday March 20

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 7:8-25; John 2:1-25

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

The idols have ears but do not hear ...
so unlike you, for all your hearing ...
so like us, ears but do not hear.

You have endlessly summoned us: *shema*,
listen,
listen up,
pay attention,
heed,
obey,
turn ...

We mostly do not ... in our narcissism,
in our recalcitrance,
in our departure from you.

So we pray for ears, open, unwaxed,
attentive, circumcised.

Call us by name ... so that we know,
Call us to you ... so that we live,
Call us into the world ... so that we care,
Call us to risk ... so that we trust
beyond ourselves.

You speak / we listen / and comes life,
abundant,
beyond all that we ask or think ...

Our ears to hear your word of life.
Amen.

On reading Jeremiah 10:1–16 / March 23, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 53).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK



Emil Nolde, *Mocking*, oil on canvas, 1909

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, King of the Jews!” they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. – Matthew 27:28-30

Expressionist painters like Nolde sought to both evoke and provoke emotion by distorting their subject matter. The figures in this painting are grotesque, exaggerated, and painted in jarring colours; they are almost hard to look at. The colour palate blends in a way that creates a sense of confusion, demanding your eye to find sense in the chaos. In the midst of this, the figure of Christ is serene and regal. He does not react to the mocking or resist the grip of those who grab at Him.

1. Have you ever been in the place of the mocker? How have you felt after?
2. How would you react in the place of Jesus? How have you reacted in the past to situations like this?
3. How does this image of mockery add to your understanding of the day that Jesus sacrificed himself for you?

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 8:1-19; Colossians 4:2-18

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(First Sunday after Trinity)

God, the strength of all them that trust in thee,
mercifully accept our prayers;
and because the weakness of our mortal nature
can do no good thing without thee,
grant us the help of thy grace,
that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee,
both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 70). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Thursday March 21

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 8:20-9:12; John 3:1-21

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF DWIGHT L MOODY

Our Heavenly Father,
we pray you to forgive our lack of enthusiasm.
We pray you to forgive us for our coldness.
We pray you to forgive us for loving you so little
and serving you so poorly.
O God, help us to reconsecrate ourselves to you and your service.
May the Spirit that came upon Gideon and Joshua and Elijah,
and that came on the day of Pentecost,
come upon us here.
O Spirit of the living God,
fall upon us here,
and may our hearts be all on fire for the Son of God.
And may we be willing to lay aside our dignity
and position
and standing,
and go forth into the vineyard and work for you.
O Spirit of God,
come upon us
and give us power to work for Christ;
power to preach the Gospel,
power to tell the story of the Cross.
We ask it all in the name of your beloved Son. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Chandler, M., & Wilson, J. C. (2013). *To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain* (pp. 149–157). Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

REJOICE?

The Lord is at hand. (Phil. 4:5)

Apparently, two ladies in Philippi were having a disagreement. We don't get much background on the nature of the disagreement, but Paul begins the fourth chapter of Philippians by urging them to make amends, to set aside whatever differences they have and seek peace with each other. He calls them out in front of everybody: "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2).

Why might Paul do this at this point in the letter? He has gone through some serious exposition of the gospel and built his case in love and affection for the passionate pursuit of Christ, the cultivation of holy discontentment, the working out of salvation in grace-driven effort, and the centering on the gospel. After all that, then, he pointedly requests that Euodia and Syntyche put all of that into action by reconciling. He even asks the rest of the church to help them: "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side

with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3).

Why would Paul care if everybody’s getting along or not?

The primary reason is this: he knows that a divided church is a terrible witness. Where people see in a church anger, dissention, inability to reconcile, and the holding of grudges, they do not see Christ as beautiful. So that would be the biggest reason. But where Paul goes next is rather curious.

Another reason why he would urge the church to put its belief in grace into practice toward unity in fellowship with each other is because he knows that this produces joy. Sticking to our relational guns, holding grudges, giving people what they deserve—all of those things may give us a smug sense of satisfaction. But they cannot produce real, deep, abiding joy.

When the people in a church dwell together in the unity of the gospel and together pursue the building up of one another in love, they are providing fertile soil for the roots of deep joy.

But Paul does not tell them to feel happy. He is not asking them to produce a false feeling. Rather he encourages them to reach an agreement, and then he commands a specific action as a logical response: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

It’s so important, he commands it twice in the same breath. He tells them (and us) to rejoice again, just in case we missed it the first time or were tempted to gloss over this point.

There are two crucial bits of information in Philippians 4:4 that help us understand this joy Paul commands us to express. The first is this: we are to rejoice “always.”

...

A TOTALLY REASONABLE JOY

Mature believers in Christ rejoice in the Lord always. Just as Paul surprises us by connecting the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche with rejoicing, he surprises us by connecting rejoicing always—even in the midst of suffering and intense difficulty, perhaps even death—with ... *reasonableness*?

Yes. He writes, “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone” (Phil. 4:5).

Well, okay, but now I still need help. Because if you’re appealing to *reasonableness* on the day that I can’t find the ambulance carrying my son to the hospital, I have to confess that it’s a little hard to come by. I’m not acting reasonably in that moment. I’m freaking out. I’m inwardly collapsing. In the chaos and the fear and the sheer panic of the moment, I don’t have any reasonableness in me.

However, this reasonableness, or gentleness in some translations, is not built on or predicated by my circumstances. It never is. That’s why Paul is able to say, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” The reasonableness he wants us to be known for is built on the next group of words in the text. The train of thought goes like this:

“Let your reasonableness be known to everyone” (4:5).

Why?

Because “the Lord is at hand” (4:5).

Why do the mature rejoice in the Lord always? They can be reasonable in the midst of whatever situation they find themselves in precisely because the Lord is always at hand.

The basis of this is doctrinal. The essence of this is spiritual. When you put those two things together, you come up with doxology. That word *doxology* basically comes from two Greek words—*doxa*, which means belief, and *logos*, which means word(s). Literally, *doxology* means “words of belief,” but the way in which it is used is as confessional praise, or an expression of worship. In the New Testament, the Greek word *doxa* becomes somewhat synonymous with “glory” as well. So a doxology, like what you might sing at the end of your church worship

service, is an ascription of glory to God in a song of praise that expresses a doctrinal truth. The most famous doxology, often called simply “The Doxology,” goes like this:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

This doxology is an expression of praise that communicates important doctrinal truths about God: He is the source of all blessings, He is the creator of all creatures, and He is a Trinity.

We find doxologies like this in the Bible as well—Romans 11:33–36 is an example—and it should come as no surprise that as Paul gets worked up in outlining the depths of theological truths revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, he erupts in praise. This is the purpose of theology, in any event: *worship*. If our theology does not drive us to worship God in Christ, it is pointless.

In Jeremiah 32, the prophet Jeremiah is in prison. I always like to talk about or write about people in prison or people about to die just so you’ll know that following Jesus doesn’t always end up with you being wealthy and healthy and everyone loving you. There’s a bit of that out there today, and I just want to continually point out that actually, in the Bible, it rarely, if ever, works that way. So here’s one of those cases. Jeremiah, like Paul centuries later, says everything God wants him to say. He has been obedient to all God asked him to do, and he finds himself imprisoned by his own countrymen. The Chaldeans are about to overthrow Jerusalem.

So Jeremiah says, “Repent. Turn to the Lord, or the Chaldeans will burn this place to the ground.” He rebukes and proclaims, over and over. The leaders of Israel get tired of him, so they put him in prison.

Faithful Jeremiah is in prison, and the Chaldeans are at the wall. It’s almost over, and when it’s all said and done Jeremiah gets to go into captivity with the people who imprisoned him, those who didn’t heed his call to repent and see the city saved.

Now, let’s look at what Jeremiah says in 32:17: “Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

Look at the spirit inside of a man who’s in a horrific place—but whose eyes are on God and not on his circumstances. This is a man who is in a far more difficult spot than nearly all of us right now, and his eyes are on God, not on himself. What’s his response? He sings: “Ah, Maker of the heavens and earth! Nothing is too hard for you.” He’s exulting! He’s erupting in doxology, poetic words of belief.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 9:13-35; Philemon 1:1-25

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(Fourth Sunday after Trinity)

God the protector of all that trust in thee,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;
increase and multiply upon us thy mercy;
that thou being our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we finally lose not the things eternal:
Grant this heavenly father,
for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 76). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Friday March 22

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

'Remember, O Lord, Thy bowels of compassion,
and Thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world' (Ps. 24:6),
and stretch out Thy hand to Thy creature
that stretches forth to Thee.
Help the weakness of him that struggles after Thee.
Draw me; for Thou knowest that I cannot come to Thee,
except Thou, the Father, draw me with the cords of love and desire.
Make me a servant acceptable and pleasing unto Thee;
for Thou knowest that I cannot please Thee else.
Give me, I pray Thee, those holy gifts with which alone to please Thee,
Thou that givest good gifts to them that ask Thee.
Grant, I pray Thee, that my sole love and sole desire may be Thyself;
my sole love and only fear, Thyself.
Take me wholly for Thine own,
Thou who knowest that to Thee I owe all that I am,
all that I have,
all that I know,
and all my powers.
Convert me wholly to Thy praise and glory,
I that owe myself wholly to Thy praise.
Deliver not, I pray Thee, Thy creature to Thy enemies;
keep me for Thyself,
whose alone I am entirely;
and perfect in every part what Thou hast begun,
and confirm what Thou hast wrought. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 93–94). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – MUSIC

Meditate and reflect on [Your Hands](#) as sung by J.J. Heller (available on youtube.com). Listen to the song a couple of times, leaving space in between to reflect and pray as the Lord leads you.

I have unanswered prayers
I have trouble I wish wasn't there
And I have asked a thousand ways
That You would take my pain away

That You would take my pain away
I am trying to understand
How to walk this weary land
Make straight the paths that crookedly lie
Oh Lord, before these feet of mine
Oh Lord, before these feet of mine
When my world is shaking
Heaven stands
When my heart is breaking
I never leave Your hands
When You walked upon the Earth
You healed the broken, lost, and hurt
I know You hate to see me cry
One day You will set all things right
Yea, one day You will set all things right
When my world is shaking
Heaven stands
When my heart is breaking
I never leave Your hands
Your hands
Your hands that shape the world
Are holding me, they hold me still
Your hands that shape the world
Are holding me, they hold me still
When my world is shaking
Heaven stands
When my heart is breaking
I never leave You when...
When my world is shaking
Heaven stands
When my heart is breaking
I never leave...
I never leave Your hands
(music by J. J. Heller)

End by using this song as part of your prayer and consider these words throughout your day.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 10:21-11:10; Ephesians 1:1-23

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(Sixth Sunday after Trinity)

God, which hast prepared to them that love thee
such good things as pass all man's understanding;
Pour into our hearts such love toward thee,
that we loving thee in all things,
may obtain thy promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 80). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Saturday March 23

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER HYMN BUILT ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Have Thine Own way, Lord
Have Thine Own way
Thou art the Potter
I am the clay
Mould me and make me
After Thy will
While I am waiting
Yielded and still

Have Thine Own way Lord
Have Thine Own way
Hold o'er my being
Absolute sway
Fill with Thy Spirit
Till all shall see
Christ only, always
Living in me.

[Cross, T. J. E. (2003). *How to Pray: Lessons from the Lord's Prayer* (p. 35). Belfast, Northern Ireland; Greenville, SC: Ambassador.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – HISTORY

The East-West Schism (1054)

Long-standing differences between Western and Eastern Christians finally caused a definitive break, and Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox still remain separate.
by GEORGE T. DENNIS

On Saturday, July 16, 1054, as afternoon prayers were about to begin, Cardinal Humbert, legate of Pope Leo IX, strode into the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia, right up to the main altar, and placed on it a parchment that declared the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, to be excommunicated. He then marched out of the church, shook its dust from his feet, and left the city. A week later the patriarch solemnly condemned the cardinal.

Centuries later, this dramatic incident was thought to mark the beginning of the schism between the Latin and the Greek churches, a division that still separates Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox (Greek, Russian, and other). Today, however, no serious scholar maintains that the schism began in 1054. The process leading to the definitive break was much more complicated, and no single cause or event can be said to have precipitated it.



Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, site of the excommunication of 1054. The building—today the St. Sophia Museum in Istanbul—reflects more recent additions of Islamic art and architecture.

Immediate Causes of the Break

In 1048 a French bishop was elected as Pope Leo IX. He and the clerics who accompanied him to Rome were intent on reforming the papacy and the entire church. Five years earlier in Constantinople, the rigid and ambitious Michael Cerularius was named patriarch.

Problems arose in Southern Italy (then under Byzantine rule) in the 1040s, when Norman warriors conquered the region and replaced Greek [Eastern] bishops with Latin [Western] ones. People were confused, and they argued about the proper form of the liturgy and other external matters. Differences over clerical marriage, the bread used for the Eucharist, days of fasting, and other usages assumed an unprecedented importance.

When Cerularius heard that the Normans were forbidding Greek customs in Southern Italy, he retaliated, in 1052, by closing the Latin churches in Constantinople. He then induced bishop Leo of Ochrid to compose an attack on the Latin use of unleavened bread and other practices. In response to this provocative treatise, Pope Leo sent his chief adviser, Humbert, a tactless and narrow-minded man with a strong sense of papal authority, to Constantinople to deal with the problem directly.

On arriving in the imperial city in April 1054, Humbert launched into a vicious criticism of Cerularius and his supporters. But the patriarch ignored the papal legate, and an angry Humbert stalked into Hagia Sophia and placed on the altar the bull of excommunication. He returned to Rome convinced he had gained a victory for the Holy See.

Dramatic though they were, the events of 1054 were not recorded by the chroniclers of the time and were quickly forgotten. Negotiations between the pope and the Byzantine emperor continued, especially in the last two decades of the century, as the Byzantines sought aid against the invading Turks. In 1095, to provide such help, Pope Urban II proclaimed the Crusades;

certainly there was no schism between the churches at that time. Despite episodes of tension and conflict, Eastern and Western Christians lived and worshiped together.

In the latter half of the twelfth century, however, friction between the groups increased, caused not so much by religious differences as by political and cultural ones. Violent anti-Latin riots erupted in Constantinople in 1182, and in 1204 Western knights brutally ravaged Constantinople itself. The tension accelerated, and by 1234, when Greek and Latin churchmen met to discuss their differences, it was obvious they represented different churches.

Underlying Causes of the Break

What caused the schism? It was not the excommunications of 1054; not differences in theology, discipline, or liturgy; not political or military conflicts. These may have disposed the churches to draw apart, as did prejudice, misunderstanding, arrogance, and plain stupidity. More fundamental, perhaps, was the way each church came to perceive itself.

The eleventh-century reform in the Western Church called for the strengthening of papal authority, which caused the church to become more autocratic and centralized. Basing his claims on his succession from St. Peter, the pope asserted his direct jurisdiction over the entire church, East as well as West.

The Byzantines, on the other hand, viewed their church in the context of the imperial system; their sources of law and unity were the ecumenical councils and the emperor, whom God had placed over all things, spiritual and temporal. They believed that the Eastern churches had always enjoyed autonomy of governance, and they rejected papal claims to absolute rule. But neither side was really listening to the other.

In addition, since the ninth century, theological controversy had focused on the procession of the Holy Spirit. In the life of the Trinity, does the Spirit proceed from the Father only, or from the Father *and* from the Son (*Filioque* in Latin)? The Western church, concerned about resurgent Arianism, had, almost inadvertently, added the word to the Nicene Creed, claiming that it made more precise a teaching already in the creed. The Greeks objected to the unilateral addition to the creed, and they strongly disagreed with the theological proposition involved, which seemed to them to diminish the individual properties of the three Persons in the Trinity. In 1439 Greek and Latin theologians at the Council of Florence, after debating the issue for over a year, arrived at a compromise that, while reasonable, has not proven fully satisfactory.

After the Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, the Eastern church lived on under Turkish rule and then in various nations. Millions of Orthodox Christians in those lands are still separated from the millions of Christians adhering to Rome. Today greater efforts are made to address the issues, but neither side seems willing to make the necessary concessions. As a result, Christians who share a common belief and accept Jesus as head of the church, feel that they cannot share his Eucharist.

[Dennis, G. T. (1990). The East-West Schism (1054). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*.]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 12:21-36; Ephesians 2:1-22

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A COLLECT OF THOMAS CRANMER

(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity)

Lord we beseech thee,
absolve thy people from their offences,
that through thy bountiful goodness
we may be delivered from the bands of all those sins,
which by our frailty we have committed:
Grant this for thy only son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

[Barbee, C. F., & Zahl, P. F. M. (2006). *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (p. 116). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Week 4

Sunday March 24 – Saturday March 30

Memory Verse for the Week

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

Hebrews 10:12-14 (ESV)

¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴**For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	-----	Sun Mar 24, 10:00am & 5:00pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Mon/Wed, 7:00am & Fri, 8:00am
Annunciation of Mary	-----	Mon Mar 25, 6:00pm
Encounter	-----	Fri Mar 29, 6:00pm

Sunday March 24

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Genesis 18:16-33; Luke 18:1-14

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Our lives are occupied territory ...

occupied by a cacophony of voices,
and the din undoes us.

In the daytime we have no time to listen,

beset as we are by anxiety and goals
and assignments and work,

and in the night the voices are so confusing
we can hardly sort out what could possibly be your voice
from the voice of our mothers and our fathers
and our best friends and our pet projects,
because they all sound so much like you.

We are people over whom that word *shema* has been written.

We are listeners, but we do not listen well.

So we bid you, by the time the sun goes down today

or by the time the sun comes up tomorrow,
by night or by day,

that you will speak in ways that we can hear
out beyond ourselves.

It is your speech to us that carries us where we have never been,

and it is your speech to us that is our only hope.

So give us ears. Amen.

In anticipation of reading 1 Samuel 2–3 / 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 56).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – GATHERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10:00 AM AND 5:00 PM

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 24:1-28; Mark 14:53-72

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF MENNO SIMONS

(Based on Psalm 25:4 – *“Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.”*)

O Lord of hosts,
I know through the word of thy grace that there is but one way which leadeth to life,
which is strait and narrow for the flesh,
beset with thorns and dangers all around,
and is found by few, and still fewer walk therein;
it is like a treasure hid in a field which none can find
but he to whom it is shown by the Spirit.
Dear Lord, there is no way but thou alone;
all who walk through thee will find the gates of life.
There is another way which seems very pleasant to the flesh,
which appears soft, smooth and broad,
strown with roses, pleasant and agreeable to the eye,
but its end leads to death.
On this way the whole world walks,
unconcerned and without fear,
and prefers things perishable to imperishable,
evil to good, and darkness to the light of the world.
They all walk on the perverse, broad and crooked way;
they become faint in the way of unrighteousness,
and know not the way of the Lord.
It is true, the way of error seems right in the eyes of fools,
but I know through thy Spirit and word that it is the certain road to the abyss of hell.
Therefore, I entreat thee, dear Lord,
be merciful to me a poor sinner;
show me thy path, and teach me thy way;
for thy way is the right way, godly, pleasant, humble, chaste,
full of peace and of all good,
and will lead my soul to eternal life. Amen.

(<https://jeremyberg.wordpress.com/2017/10/27/praying-a-psalm-with-menno-simons/>)

Monday March 25

Annunciation of Mary

Attend the Eucharist Service at 6 pm in the prayer Chapel

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Jesus, Jesus; for the sake of this Thy Name,
 deal with me according to this Name.
Jesus, Jesus; forget Thy proud provoker,
 and bend Thine eye upon the poor invoker of Thy Name,
 the Name so sweet,
 the Name so dear,
 the Name so full of comfort to a sinner,
 and so full of blessed hope.

For what is Jesus but Saviour?

Therefore, Jesus, for Thine own self's sake be a Jesus to me;
Thou who formedst me, that I perish not;
 who redeemedst me, that Thou condemn me not;
 who createdst me by Thy goodness,
 that Thy handiwork perish not by my iniquity.

Recognise and own, Benignest, what is Thine;
 take away what is another's.

Jesus, Jesus mercy on me, while the day of mercy lasts,
 that Thou damn me not in the day of judgment.

For what profit shalt Thou have in my blood,
 if I go down into eternal corruption?

'For the dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord,
 nor any of them that go down to hell' (Ps. 103:17).

If Thou fold me in the wide, wide Bosom of Thy mercy,
 that Bosom will be none the less wide on my account.

Therefore admit me, O most desired Jesus,
 admit me into the number of Thine elect;
 that with them I may praise Thee,
 and enjoy Thee,
 and make my boast in Thee amongst all who love Thy Name;
 who with the Father and the Holy Ghost reignest gloriously
 throughout unending ages. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 42–43). London: Burns and Oates.]

Hahn, S. (2002). *Understanding “Our Father”: Biblical Reflections on the Lord’s Prayer* (pp. 43–47).
Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

There’s something childlike about the turn we take with the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer. In the first three petitions, we prayed to God for the sake of His name, His will, His Kingdom.

Now we turn, like children, to ask Him for “our” bread. It is interesting to note that we ask Him for food as if it already belonged to us—as if He had an obligation to provide it—as if He were our Father.

Bread for Greatness

This is the filial boldness of God’s children. We ask, and we know we shall receive. For what father, “if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?” (Mt. 7:9).

We ask for *our* bread because we address *our* Father, and fathers produce families, not individuals.

It’s interesting, too, that we ask for “our” bread and not “my” bread. Jesus teaches us that even when we pray in private (cf. Mt. 6:6), we do not pray alone. We pray in solidarity with all the children of God, the Church of the living and the saints in heaven. And we pray *for* the whole Church, that all may have the bread they need today. This prayer is something intimate, yet something shared. It’s familial.

In the ancient world, the dispensation of daily bread was a sign of a kingdom’s prosperity. When the nation was doing well, winning its wars, and selling its goods, its citizens received an ample ration of bread, “without money and without price” (Is. 55:1). Even greater was Israel’s vision of the ongoing banquet that would come with the reign of the anointed Son of David, the Messiah (cf. Is. 65:13–14).

The first Christians recognized that the Son of David had begun His reign—and His banquet. Moreover, His banquet had spiritual benefits that surpassed the most sumptuous worldly feast. For all the early Christian commentators, “our bread” meant not only their everyday material needs, but also their need for communion with God. “Our bread,” in common speech, meant the Eucharist. “[T]hey devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes” (Acts 2:42, 46).

In the generations after the death of the apostles, we find that the common practice of Christians was to receive the Eucharist every day. Tertullian attests to this in North Africa, and Saint Hippolytus in Rome. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, in 252, speaks at length about the spiritual meaning of this petition: “And as we say, ‘Our Father,’ because He is the Father of those who understand and believe, so also we call it ‘our bread,’ because Christ is the Bread of those who are in union with His Body. And we ask that this Bread be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation may not, by the interposition of some heinous sin, be prevented from receiving Communion and from partaking of the heavenly Bread and be separated from Christ’s Body.”

That Says It All

How succinctly this petition expresses all our needs in life, both individual and corporate, both material and spiritual. Saint Augustine said that there are three levels of meaning to the bread we ask for: (1) all those things that meet the wants of this life; (2) the Sacrament of the Body of Christ, which we may daily receive; and (3) our spiritual Food, the Bread of life, Who is Jesus.

Our bodies hunger after food; our souls hunger after God. God will fulfill both hungers because He is our Father. He can fulfill both hungers because He is almighty—“Our Father ... in heaven.” We pray to the God who loves us so much that He has counted the hairs of our heads (cf. Lk. 12:7). This is the God who can “spread a table in the wilderness” (Ps. 78:19), the God who drew water from a dry desert rock.

A child trusts his father to provide for his needs as they arise. A little child has no clear concept of the future, and so has little worry about tomorrow. The Lord’s Prayer teaches us to desire a child’s life of humility, trust, and dependence on God. We ask not for riches, but only for what we need for the day. We are confident that God will provide. This is a valuable lesson for us grown-ups to learn. We pride ourselves on self-reliance; we tend to want to control our lives and the lives of others. But, says Saint Augustine, “no matter how rich a man is on earth, he is still God’s beggar.”

Praying this way, we cultivate “a saintlike poverty,” says Saint Cyril of Alexandria. “For to ask is not the part of those who have, but of those rather who are in need ... and cannot do without.”

Unsolved Mysteries

One word of this petition has baffled both scholars and saints since the early days of the Church. It is the word *epiούσιος*, which we usually translate as “daily.” Some English translations have us pray for our “daily bread”; others, for our “bread for tomorrow”; still others, for our “supersubstantial bread.” The truth is that the word is impossible to translate, since it appears nowhere else in all of ancient Greek literature; nor does it appear in personal correspondence, legal documents, or business records that have survived from the time of Christ. The greatest Fathers of the Church wrestled with the mystery—Cyril of Alexandria and Jerome are among the giants who have left us studies—and admitted the possibility of all the modern readings. But they could come to no final agreement about *epiούσιος*.

Tradition, however, leaves us with a solution: It’s all true. We pray for our daily bread, for the material needs of the day. We pray for our daily spiritual communion with Jesus. We pray that God will give us grace in superabundance. And we pray even today for our “bread for tomorrow”—our share, right now, in the heavenly banquet of Jesus Christ, ...

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 13:1-16; Ephesians 3:1-21

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN KNOX

O heavenly Father,
grant that we may bestow this day wholly in your service,
so that all our thoughts, words, and deeds
 may redound to the glory of your Name
 and good example to all men,
 who, seeing our good works,
 may glorify you our heavenly Father.
And since of your mere favor and love
 you have not only created us in your own similitude and likeness,
 but also have chosen us to be heirs with your dear Son Jesus Christ,
 of that immortal kingdom which you prepared for us
 before the beginning of the world,
we ask you to increase our faith and knowledge,
 and to lighten our hearts with your Holy Spirit,
so that we may in the meantime live in godly conversation and integrity of life. Amen

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Tuesday March 26

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 13:17-14:14; John 5:1-23

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF D A CARSON

*How constrained is our vision,
how inadequate our words,
how paltry our love for you, Lord God,
in the wake of all that you have done,
in the wake of all that you have disclosed of yourself
in your Son
through your Word.*

*Fill our hearts with joy
that we may not only be ashamed of sin and loathe it,
but also that we may be drawn to your own dear Son,
to holiness,
to transparent love for one another—
all secured by Christ and his work on the cross on our behalf.*

*Draw us on to the new heaven and the new earth
precisely because that will also make us better stewards of your grace here.*

*Grant that even now we may understand in our own experience
how the Holy Spirit is the deposit of the promised inheritance,
the anticipation of what will one day be.*

*Grant us the power to grasp,
together with all of God's people,
the limitless dimensions of your love for us.*

Shape our lives by gratitude and adoration.

*Give us courage and stamina
and with it holy joy
and a love for all that is holy.*

*Open our eyes to see Jesus,
the cost that he bore,
the grace that he pours out upon us,
until we are ravished by his beauty,
consumed by a heart full of adoration.*

For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (p. 224). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – VIDEO

Watch this short video and spend some time in contemplation of what you've learned.

thebibleproject.com/explore/bad-word-series → watch the “transgression” video

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 14:15-31; Ephesians 4:1-16

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

You are holy, Lord God, who alone works wonders.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are most high.

You are the Almighty King,

you, holy Father, King of heaven and earth.

You are the Lord God Triune and One;

all good.

You are good, all good, highest good,

Lord God living and true.

You are charity, love.

You are wisdom.

You are humility.

You are patience.

You are security.

You are quietude.

You are joy and gladness.

You are justice and temperance.
You are all riches to sufficiency.
You are beauty.
You are meekness.
You are protector.
You are guardian and defender.
You are strength.
You are refreshment.
You are our hope.
You are our faith.
You are our great sweetness.
You are our eternal life,
 great and admirable Lord,
 God Almighty,
 merciful Saviour. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Wednesday March 27

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

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

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

We are counted your people.

We are grateful to be called by you, and
glad for our special way of faith in the world.

You have marked us and named us and signed us,

and we are different,

different memories,
different hopes,
different fears,
different commands,
different ways of being.

That difference we find glorious, but at times a burden too severe.

We yearn to be like the others,

like the others in power,
in money,
in freedom,
in certitude,
in security,

like the others,

uncalled, unburdened, unembarrassed.

We come to you in that deep trial of difference and likeness.

Engage us in our difference,

Give us courage for our different vocations,
and energy for our different hope.

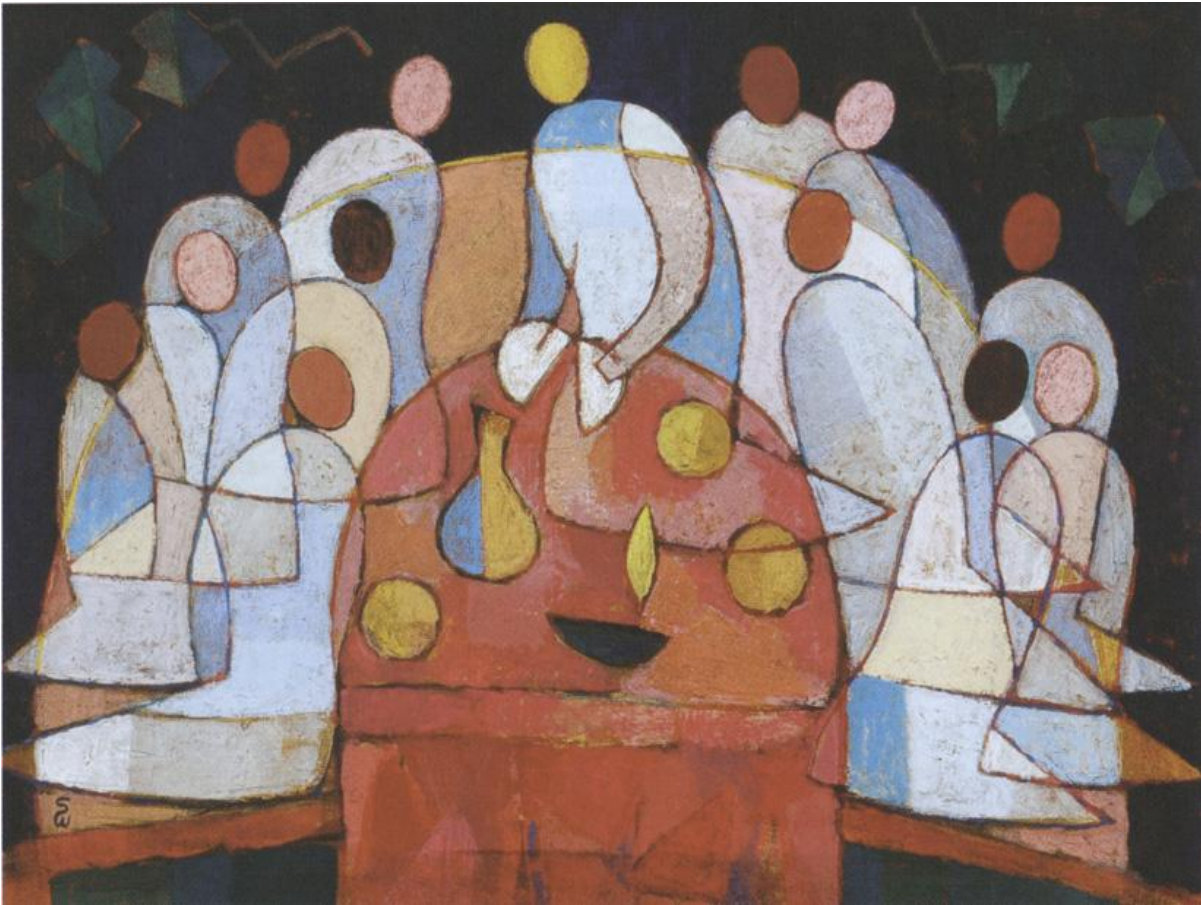
In the name of your crucified, Easter One, so unlike all the others.

Amen.

On reading 1 Samuel 8 / March 11, 1999

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 89).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK



Soichi Watanabe, *We are One in Jesus our Lord*, acrylic on canvas, 2008

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith.

– Romans 3:22-25a

In this unique depiction of the Last Supper, the figures of Jesus and His disciples are simplistic in nature and nearly indistinguishable one from another. The face of Christ, in the centre, is golden, while the faces of the disciples are of all different colours. Notice the golden arc that binds Jesus and the disciples together. At the centre of this arc is the bread, broken in the hands of Jesus and symbolic of the sacrifice he is about to make.

1. Place yourself at this table among the disciples. What you do see, hear, taste, and feel?
2. How does Watanabe's depiction of the disciples emphasize the unity of the body of Christ?
3. What does this unity look like today? How should it look?

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 15:27-16:35; Ephesians 4:17-30

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CLEMENT OF ROME

O merciful and compassionate,
forgive us our iniquities,
and unrighteousness,
and transgressions,
and shortcomings.

Do not reckon every sin of your servants,
but cleanse us with the cleansing of your truth,
and guide our steps to walk in holiness of heart,
to do the things which are good and pleasing before you and before our rulers.

Lord, make your face to shine upon us in peace for our good
so that we may be sheltered by your mighty hand,
and delivered from all sin by your uplifted arm,
and deliver us from those who hate us wrongfully.

Give concord and peace to us and to all who dwell on the earth,
as you gave to our fathers who called on you in holiness with faith and truth,
and grant that we may be obedient to your almighty and glorious name,
and to our rulers and governors upon the earth. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Thursday March 28

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 17:1-16; John 6:1-21

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Now do I fly to Thee, O merciful Father,
 knowing that Thou art my only refuge from Thyself.
Who can deliver me from Thy Hands but Thou only?
Thy mercy can deliver me—
 the mercy which I have not only demerited
 but resisted
 and rebelled against—
 can deliver me from Thy all-just anger,
 which I have so wretchedly and so gratuitously provoked.
Deign, therefore, to receive me, O Lord,
 now that I return to Thee.
Turn away, I pray Thee,
 Thy all-holy eyes from my foulnesses
 and my ingritudes;
and bend them on Thyself,
 from whom none ever asks forgiveness without hope of winning it.
In Thyself wilt Thou find at once the source and the justification of any mercy
 Thou mayest show,
 according to the abundance of Thy sweetness
 and the immensity of Thy mercy.
Do not, I pray Thee, look upon me;
 for in me Thou wilt find nothing but what well deserves Thy wrath,
 or is all worthy of eternal death.
Then turn away Thy holy eyes, O Lord, from the sight of all that is so base and vile in me; ...
O merciful Father, turn,
 turn to that Fountain of Mercy,
 whose mercy knows no measure and no end,
 and so look upon me Thy creature with merciful and tender regard.
I am Thy creature, O Lord, and the work of Thy hands. Amen

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 90–91). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Grenz, S. J. (2005). *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom* (Revised Edition, pp. 99–101). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

The Importance of Persistency

Persistency in prayer is biblical. It carries the command of Jesus himself. But why does our Lord admonish his disciples to persist? Why is it often necessary to bring a request to God repeatedly? In what sense is this beneficial? Let me enumerate five benefits that come to us when we pray persistently and then describe an all-encompassing benefit of persistent prayer.

First, when we remain steadfast in prayer, our faith grows. Such growth occurs in part because God's "not yet"—the seemingly endless time when God seems to be silent—often becomes a time in which our faith is tested. When our heavenly Father does not seem to be hearing or answering our petition, we are tempted to question his faithfulness to us his children. It is precisely during such times of temptation and doubt that returning to our knees becomes so important. Continuing to petition God when the answer does not seem to be on the horizon is itself an act of faith. When we persist in prayer, we are in fact exercising our faith. And the Holy Spirit responds by strengthening that faith.

Second, persistency can lead to patience. We live in a "fast-food" society in which patience has become a lost virtue. But God is not a "fast-food" God. The Father of our Lord Jesus gives good gifts to his children in keeping with his good plan for their lives and in accordance with his perfect timing. One of these gifts is patience, a gift that is sometimes bestowed indirectly and unexpectedly. We sometimes receive this gift when we find ourselves waiting for God's response to our petitions for a quite different gift. Moreover, sometimes we sense that God is asking us—even forcing us—to learn to "wait on the Lord." It is, however, in such situations that we come to discover what true waiting entails. Persistency heightens these spiritual experiences that God deems necessary for the development of our character.

Third, persistent praying assists us in the process of determining the extent to which we truly desire and genuinely need what we are requesting. Sometimes our persistency becomes the means whereby we confirm the seriousness of a particular request. Perhaps we can understand why this is so by considering how parents respond to the requests of young children. Good parents do not necessarily rush out to buy a particular toy the first time their child asks for it. Instead, it is the repetition of the request that alerts them that their child's desire for the toy is genuine. The child knows what he or she wants and demonstrates this through the repetition of the request for it. In a somewhat similar manner, our persistency indicates our genuine desire for God to act in a particular way or to meet a particular sensed need.

At other times, persistent prayer becomes the instrument through which we become aware of what we genuinely desire. Again here, the parent-child dynamic can aid our understanding. Children are notorious for requesting that their parents buy them everything that they see. Although this can become wearisome to the parents, it is actually of great benefit to the child. Asking is the process whereby children learn what they truly want and, perhaps more importantly, what they really need. In the process of asking, the child is (even subconsciously) sorting through the various wants and determining which are the most important. In a similar way, we often initially bring a request to God in what is unreflective prayer. But as we continue to bring our particular requests, we are led to sort through the many petitions that we have voiced. As this process continues, some requests fall by the wayside, whereas others come to be articulated with greater fervency. In this manner, we gain insight into what we truly desire. And as this occurs, we are able to measure our desires against God's purposes.

Fourth, perseverance in prayer can foster genuine gratitude for God's provision when it finally comes. In a world of instant gratification, we so often fail to appreciate what easily comes our way. What is received after a time of waiting and intense effort, in contrast, is generally greeted with great thanksgiving. And we often highly treasure such gifts long after they have been given. In a similar manner, through determined petition and patient waiting, we are able to learn true gratitude for what God has done and will do on behalf of his children. Persistent prayer can lead to jubilant joy and hearty thanksgiving when the petition is answered.

Fifth, persistency can be the means through which we come to realize that we have a role to play in the answering of our prayer. As we repeatedly bring the petition to God, we are given occasion to mull over the various aspects of the circumstance about which we are concerned. As

we do so, the Holy Spirit is able to illumine our minds and transform our hearts so that we are both able to see and willing to do our part as those who gladly cooperate with God in the in-breaking of the kingdom into the situation of need.

These five beneficial results of persistent prayer are all connected to an important dimension of persistency. They arise out of the fact that persistency requires that we continually voice a request over a period of time. Situations in which God's answer does not come immediately provide the occasion for us to think through our petitions to determine the extent to which our desires reflect kingdom values. This process inaugurates a special kind of conversation with God, a dialogue that could not otherwise occur. Moreover, by means of this conversation we truly become partners with God in the advancement of the kingdom. Persistency in prayer allows us to sift through the present—including our present concerns—and seek to envision what the in-breaking of the kingdom would entail.

This observation leads to the sixth benefit. I have declared repeatedly that prayer releases God's willingness and ability to act. Prayer is especially effective when we know the will of God and can pray confidently that it be done. Whenever we truly know God's will, we can persist in prayer, confident that in God's good timing the answer will come. When we do not know the divine will, persistency in prayer takes on new significance. In such situations, prayer serves as a crucial means for discerning God's will.

Discernment of the divine will comes through persistent prayer in that such prayer provides the space in which the Holy Spirit can bring about changes in the content of our petitions. Through this kind of prayer, the Spirit is able to illumine our minds and redirect the desires of our hearts. The transformation of heart and mind, in turn, leads to praying that is in accordance with the will of God.

When God's answer is not forthcoming, persistent prayer emerges as a conversation with God, or perhaps a dialogue with God's silence. We might describe such prayer in even stronger terms as a struggle to know God's ways and then to affirm God's plan. When this struggle gives way to clarity regarding God's purposes, we come away from the experience with a greater awareness of who God is and a deepened relationship with the God whom we serve. This marks the victory of persistent prayer in our own lives.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 18:1-27; Ephesians 4:31-5:21

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN KNOX

We make our prayers to you, O Lord God, most merciful Father,
for all people in general,
that you will be known to be the Savior of all the world
by the redemption purchased by your only Son Jesus Christ;
even so that such as have been until now held captive in darkness and ignorance
for lack of the knowledge of the gospel
may, through the preaching thereof,
and the clear light of your Holy Spirit,
be brought into the right way of salvation,
which is to know that you are only very God,
and that he, whom you have sent, is Jesus Christ.

Likewise, we pray that they whom you have already endued with your grace,
and illuminated their hearts with the knowledge of your Word,
may continually increase in godliness,
and be plenteously enriched with spiritual benefits;
so that we may altogether worship you,
both with heart and mouth,
and render due honor and service unto Christ
our Master, King, and Lawmaker. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Friday March 29

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 19:1-25; John 6:22-40

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

We confess that we are set this day in the midst
of your awesome, awful work.

We will, because we have no alternative,
be present this day
to your dreadful work of termination.

We watch while you pull down
and dismantle
that with which you are finished.

We will, because we have no alternative,
be present this day
to your dream-filled work
of evoking,
imagining,
forming,
and inviting.

We are double-minded in your presence,
because we treasure what you end
and we fear what you conjure—
but we are your people
and trust you all this day
in your awesome,
awful work.

Override our reluctance
and take us with you
in justice
and mercy
and peace.

Take us with you in your overriding,
that our day may be a day of joy
and well-being
and newness
from your very hand.

In the name of your decisive newness,
even Jesus. Amen.

Loyola University, Bastille Day / July 14, 1989

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 27).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – MUSIC

Meditate and reflect on [Kyrie 1](#) as sung by Fernando Ortega (available on youtube.com). Listen to the song a couple of times, leaving space in between to reflect and pray as the Lord leads you.

O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy

O Christ have mercy
O Christ have mercy
O Christ have mercy

O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy
O Lord have mercy
(music by Fernando Ortega)

End by using this song as part of your prayer and consider these words throughout your day.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 20:1-21; Ephesians 5:22-6:9

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CHARLES SPURGEON

Gracious God,
we praise you with our whole hearts for the wondrous revelation of your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
We think every day of his passion,
For all our hope lies in his death.
But as often as we think on it,
we are still filled with astonishment
that you should so love the world
as to give your only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have everlasting life;
that heaven's eternal darling should come to earth to be made a man,
and in manhood's form to be despised and rejected
of the very men whom he came to bless;
and then should be made to bear the sin of many
and to be numbered with the transgressors,
and, being found in that number, to die a transgressor's death,
a felon's death upon the gibbet of the cross.
Give us more tenderness of heart,
give us to feel the wounds of Jesus till they wound our sins to death.
Give us to have a heart pierced even as his was,
with deep sympathy for his griefs,
and an all-consuming love for His blessed person. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Saturday March 30

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 22:20-23:17; John 6:41-71

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER HYMN OF JAMES MONTGOMERY (1771-1854)

Lord, teach us how to pray aright
With reverence and with fear
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight
We may, we must draw near
We perish if we cease from prayer
O grant us power to pray
And when to meet Thee we prepare
Lord, meet us by the way
Give deep humility, the sense
Of godly sorrow give
A strong desiring confidence
To hear Thy voice and live
Faith in the only sacrifice
That can for sin atone
To build our hopes, to fix our eyes
On Christ, on Christ alone
Patience to watch and wait and weep
Though mercy long delay
Courage, our fainting souls to keep
And trust Thee, though Thou slay
Give these and then Thy will be done
Thus strengthened with all might
We through Thy Spirit and Thy Son
Shall pray, and pray aright.

[Cross, T. J. E. (2003). *How to Pray: Lessons from the Lord's Prayer* (p. 59). Belfast, Northern Ireland; Greenville, SC: Ambassador.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – HISTORY

Luther Posts the *95 Theses* (1517)

An obscure monk invited debate on a pressing church issue—and touched off a history-shattering reform movement.

by ERIC W. GRITSCH

Sometime during October 31, 1517, the day before the Feast of All Saints, the 33-year-old Martin Luther posted theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The door functioned as a bulletin board for various announcements related to academic and church affairs. The theses were written in Latin and printed on a folio sheet by the printer John Gruenberg, one of the many entrepreneurs in the new print medium first used in Germany about 1450. Luther was calling for a “disputation on the power and efficacy of indulgences out of love and zeal for truth and the desire to bring it to light.” He did so as a faithful monk and priest who had been appointed professor of

biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg, a small, virtually unknown institution in a small town.

Some copies of the theses were sent to friends and church officials, but the disputation never took place. Albert of Brandenburg, archbishop of Mainz, sent the theses to some theologians whose judgment moved him to send a copy to Rome and demand action against Luther. By the early months of 1518, the theses had been reprinted in many cities, and Luther's name had become associated with demands for radical change in the church. He had become front-page news.



Luther shows his Theses. The glamorized painting does capture the fact that “within a fortnight, every university and religious center was agog with excitement.”

The Issue of Indulgences

Why? Luther was calling for a debate on the most neuralgic issue of his time: the relationship between money and religion. “Indulgences” (from the Latin *indulgentia*—permit) had become the complex instruments for granting forgiveness of sins. The granting of forgiveness in the sacrament of penance was based on the “power of the keys” given to the apostles according to Matthew 16:18, and was used to discipline sinners. Penitent sinners were asked to show regret for their sins (contrition), confess them to a priest (confession), and do penitential work to atone for them (satisfaction).

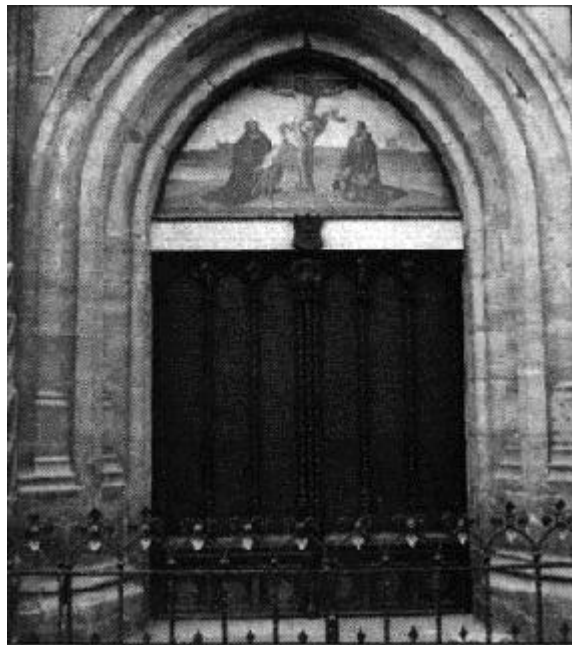
Indulgences were issued by executive papal order and by written permission in various bishoprics, and they were meant to relax or commute the penitent sinner's work of satisfaction. By the late eleventh century it had become customary to issue indulgences to volunteers taking part in crusades to the Holy Land against the Muslims; all sins would be forgiven anyone participating in such a dangerous but holy enterprise. After 1300 a complete commutation of satisfaction (“plenary indulgence”) was granted to all pilgrims visiting holy shrines in Rome during “jubilee years” (at first every hundred years, and, eventually, every twenty-five years).

Abuses soon abounded: “permits” were issued offering release from all temporal punishment—indeed, from punishment in purgatory—for a specific payment as determined by the

church. Some popes pursued their “edifice complex” by collecting large sums through the sale of indulgences. Pope Julius II, for example, granted a “jubilee indulgence” in 1510, the proceeds of which were used to build the new basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

In 1515, Pope Leo X commissioned Albert of Brandenburg to use the Dominican order to sell St. Peter indulgences in his lands. Albert owed a large sum to Rome for having granted him a special dispensation to become the ecclesiastical prince ruling three territories (Mainz, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt). He borrowed the money from the Fugger bank in Augsburg, which engaged an experienced indulgences salesman, the Dominican John Tetzel, to run the indulgences traffic; one half of the proceeds went to Albert and the Fuggers, the other half to Rome. Tetzel’s campaign gave rise to the famous jingle, “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.”

The issue of indulgences had now become linked to the prevalent anxiety regarding death and the final judgment. This anxiety was fueled by a runaway credit system based on printed money and the new banking system.



The north door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, which in Luther’s day was a common bulletin board for local church and university announcements.

The Message of Martin Luther

Luther attacked the abuse of indulgence sales in sermons, in counseling sessions, and, finally, in the Ninety-Five Theses, which rang out the revolutionary theme of the Reformation: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (Thesis 1).

By 1520, Luther announced that baptism is the only indulgence necessary for salvation. All of life is a “return to baptism” in the sense that one clings to the divine promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, who by his life, death, and resurrection liberated humankind from all punishment for sin. One lives by trusting in Christ alone and thus becoming a Christ to the neighbor in need rather than by trying to pacify God.

It is this simple reaffirmation of the ancient Christian “good news,” the gospel, that created in the church catholic the reform movement that attracted legions in Germany and other European territories. The movement was propelled by slogans stressing the essentials of Christianity: faith alone (*soia fides*), grace alone (*sola gratia*), Christ alone (*solus Christus*). Many joined because Luther criticized the papacy, which had claimed to have power over every soul. “Why does not the pope whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus (a wealthy Roman nicknamed “Fats,” who died in 53 B.C.) build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?” (Thesis 87).

The Ninety-Five Theses were the straw that broke the Catholic camel’s back. When Luther was asked later why he had done what he did, he answered, “I never wanted to do it, but was forced into it when I had to become a Doctor of Holy Scripture against my will.” Though condemned by church and state, Luther survived the attempts to burn him as a heretic.

Hindsight suggests that Luther’s theses planted the seeds of an ecumenical dialogue on what is essential for Christian unity, indeed for survival, in the interim between Christ’s first and second coming. That dialogue will bear fruit as long as it wrestles, as Luther did, with the proper distinction between the power of the Word of God and the power of human sin.

[Gritsch, E. W. (1990). Luther Posts the 95 Theses (1517). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*.]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 23:18-33; Ephesians 6:10-24

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN WESLEY

Deliver me, O God,
from all idolatrous love of any creature.
I know infinite numbers have been lost to you,
 by loving those creatures for their own sake,
 which you permit, even command, to love subordinately to you.
Preserve me, I ask you, from all such blind affection;
 be a guard to all my desires,
 that they fix on no creature any farther
 than the love of it tends to build me up in the love of you.
You require me to love you with all my heart;
I ask you that I may never open my heart to anything, but out of love to you.
Above all, deliver me, O my God, from all idolatrous self-love.
I know, O God, that this is the root of all evil.
I know you made me, not to do my own will, but yours.
I know, the very corruption of the devil is, the having a will contrary to yours.
O be my helper against this most dangerous of all idols,
 that I may both discern all its subtleties,
 and withstand all its force.
O you who have commanded me to renounce myself, give me strength,
 and I will obey your command.
My choice and desire is, to love myself, as all other creatures, in and for you.
O let your almighty arm so establish, strengthen, and settle me,
 that you may ever be the ground and pillar of all my love. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Week 5

Sunday March 31 – Saturday April 6

Memory Verse for the Week

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

2 Samuel 22:2-4 (ESV)

²He said,

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,

³ **my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,**
my shield, and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold and my refuge,
my savior; you save me from violence.

⁴ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be
praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	-----	Sun Mar 31, 10:00am & 5:00pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Mon/Wed, 7:00am & Fri, 8:00am
Encounter	-----	Fri Apr 5, 6:00pm

Sunday March 31

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 1:8-14, 1:22-2:10; Luke 18:35-19:10

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Before our well-being, there was your graciousness,
before our delight, there was your generosity,
before our joy, there was your good will.
We are second and you are first.
You are there initially with your graciousness, your generosity,
your good will—
and we receive from your inscrutable goodness grace upon grace,
gift upon gift, life upon life
—because you are there at the beginning,
at all our beginnings.

For a quick glimpse, we move out beyond our competence,
our productivity, our self-sufficiency
—in our new freedom what we glimpse is you—
outpouring yourself unreservedly in the midst of our hurt
and toward our hopes.
You are there in the splendor of your self-giving.

So we speak our timid, trembling praise back to you,
timid because we are no match for your goodness,
trembling because our praise means turning our life to you,
and we do not turn loose easily.
But we do turn loose to you,
source and goal of our very life.

Our gratitude arises out of the dailiness of our well-being,
of meals regularly before us, of folks regularly caring for us,
of homes regularly warm and safe, of sleep regularly refreshing,
of new days regularly given against the darkness,
of work regularly filling our days with order and dignity.

And in our taken-for-granted regularity,
we discern your abiding and fidelity that holds our worlds
toward well-being.

Our gratitude wells up in the midst of such regularity—
new words spoken, new children born,
new vistas opened, new risks taken,
new words uttered that heal.
We dare confess that in these startling break points,
we glimpse your powerful care
which runs beyond our capacity to manage
and beyond our exhausted capacity to cope.
You ... after all our best efforts,
it is you, you who hold and you who break.
And we are grateful. Amen.

Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. / October 21, 1990

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (pp. 137–138). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – GATHERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10:00 AM AND 5:00 PM

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Genesis 24:29-67; Mark 15:1-21

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

PRAYERS FROM THE PSALMS

From Psalm 38:1-4, 9-10, 18, 21-22

O Yahweh, do not rebuke me in your anger
or chastise me in your wrath.

For your arrows have sunk into me,
and your hand has pressed down on me.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation.

There is no health in my bones because of my sin.

For my iniquities have passed over my head;
like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

O Lord, all my longing is before you,

and my sighing is not hidden from you.
My heart throbs violently, my strength leaves me;
and the light of my eyes, that also is not with me.
For my iniquity I confess;
I am anxious because of my sin.
Do not forsake me, O Yahweh.
O my God, do not be far from me.
Hurry to help me,
O Lord, my salvation.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Monday April 1

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 24:1-18; John 7:1-24

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

How, O Lord, shall I rejoice in a freedom of mine
which is none other than the purchase of Thy bonds;
Thine, who didst endure death that I might live?
What sort of gladness in my salvation can mine be,
when that salvation is none other than the fruit of Thy griefs?
How shall I exult in a life of mine,
which is mine only by Thy death?
Am I to rejoice in Thy sufferings,
and in the cruelty of those who caused them?
For, indeed, Thou hadst not borne them,
had not they inflicted them,
and, hadst Thou not endured them,
all these my blessings had not been.
And, on the other hand,
if I grieve over the sufferings,
how shall I rejoice in the blessings for which the sufferings were undergone,
and which would not have been had the sufferings not been?
Truth is, the wickedness that inflicted them was able to do nothing
save as Thou didst willingly allow;
nor didst Thou allow save as Thou didst mercifully will.
I must needs therefore execrate [loathe] the cruelty of those who caused Thy pains;
I must compassionate and imitate Thy death and Thy toils;
I must render Thee the homage of a thankful love
for Thy merciful free choice in my behalf;
and thus exult in safety and confidence in the benefits bestowed on me. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 146–147). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Gay, C. M. (1998). *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or, Why It's Tempting to Live as If God Doesn't Exist* (pp. 185–190). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

The Triumph of the Therapeutic

Modern secular self-consciousness is most immediately evident in the contemporary preoccupation with psychological techniques and therapies of *self-help*. As Philip Rieff contended a number of years ago in an important polemic entitled *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1966), our culture's preoccupation with psychological therapies suggests a fundamental narrowing of human aspirations. While "therapy" once simply denoted the remedial treatment of physical disorders, and while a variety of psychological as well as strictly physical therapies have been of inestimable benefit to many of us, therapy has also become the focus of essentially religious devotion in contemporary culture. This is disturbing. Indeed, beyond simply seeking therapeutic

treatment for specific ailments, more and more people today are taking a therapeutic approach to the problems associated with relationships and self-esteem, to the problems of ultimate meaning and purpose, in short, to life itself and to life's most basic existential questions. Yet because the therapeutic stress is necessarily upon immediate relief and rehabilitation, and because its only final criterion is the *subjective experience of well-being*, the therapeutic orientation provides no serious discipline for the soul. Taking a therapeutic approach to life, in other words, does not lead—or, at best, only accidentally leads—to the formation of character and to the acceptance of responsibility before God and neighbor.

At first glance the therapeutic culture appears to be quite open to the possibility of religious faith. After all, tolerance has become an accepted social virtue in contemporary culture, and religion is no longer necessarily considered offensive to intellectual integrity or an impediment to authentic self-development. Recent decades have witnessed a virtual explosion of interest in traditional beliefs as well as in “new age” alternative religions. As Rieff observed, however, truly religious faith and the therapeutic *use* of religion represent two very different, indeed mutually exclusive, dispositions. The Christian religion, for example, draws the believer *out* of him or herself and into the obedience of faith, thus opening up the possibility of *self-transcendence*. The therapeutic disposition, on the other hand, tends to leave the individual more or less in control of his or her own self-development. This is not to say that it is not possible to lose oneself in therapy, for it is indeed, and people willingly surrender themselves to therapeutic regimens all the time. But these same individuals do not generally surrender to therapeutic techniques because they are convinced that they are true or good or beautiful, so much as because they have become convinced that these techniques stand a good chance of yielding the experience of well-being. Put differently, there is little genuine self-transcendence in the surrender to therapy. “Religious man was born to be saved,” Rieff lamented, “psychological man is born to be pleased.”

Of course, therapeutic ambivalence with respect to religious belief may simply stem, at least in part, from the uncertainty associated with the fact of cultural plurality. The pluralistic environment is one in which questions about the nature of the good, the meaning of truth, the existence of God, etc., may understandably be taken to be unanswerable and hence in a certain sense insignificant. In the final analysis, however, therapeutic agnosticism reflects more than simple ambivalence. Rather, it reflects the inherent tension that exists between the goals of therapy and those of traditional religious commitment. As we have seen, the dignity of the human person, understood Christianly, lies in “response-ability,” in the possibility of freely and consciously giving oneself in love to God and to one's neighbor. Therapy, on the other hand, tends to dissolve responsibility into prior causes. Scientific psychological paradigms, for example, ultimately dismiss conscious moral agency as the source of behavior in favor of such things as childhood trauma, unconscious conflict, or biochemistry. In addition, therapy's commitment to the present experience of well-being means that it must either reject the belief that some higher purpose—say, eternal life—relativizes our present experience, or that it must somehow absorb this belief and put it to good therapeutic use.

Along this line, Rieff observed that, in his independence from all gods, modern “psychological man” feels free to use god language and, indeed, to use any faith that lends itself to therapeutic use, but he cannot really *believe* anything. This is what explains the complete absence of asceticism from contemporary culture. For to the extent that we are preoccupied with the present experience of well-being, we are not likely to see the point of ascetic self-denial. In effect, the modern therapeutic disposition mortgages eternal destiny for the sake of comfort.¹² It reverses Jesus' question about the prudence of gaining the world at the cost of one's soul (Matt. 16:26) and asks instead: What good will it be for someone to gain his “soul,” yet lose this world?

“The therapy of all therapies,” Philip Rieff commented at the conclusion of *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*:

is not to attach oneself exclusively to any particular therapy, so that no illusion may survive of some end beyond an intensely private sense of well-being to be generated in the living of life itself. That a sense of well-being has become the end, rather than a by-product of striving after some superior communal end, announces a fundamental change of focus in the entire cast of our culture—toward a human condition about which there will be nothing further to say in terms of the old style of despair and hope.

If there is nothing further to say in terms of hope in our culture, then of course there is nothing truly Christian to be said either. While Christian terms and concepts will undoubtedly be made to serve therapeutic purposes in contemporary culture, then, we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by this. The Christian faith is indeed a matter of healing and rehabilitation—indeed of resurrection—but it cannot be construed therapeutically, which is to say instrumentally. Faith in God through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit is not a means, but is, along with hope and love, the *end* or purpose of human existence.

Of course, the triumph of the therapeutic has attracted a great deal of criticism in recent years. In his influential study *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979), Christopher Lasch castigated the modern obsession with self-realization and self-development. Wendy Kaminer has criticized the radical subjectivity of the self-help movement most recently in a book mockingly titled *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional* (1993) after the best-selling manifesto of “transactional analysis,” *I'm O.K., You're O.K.*¹⁷ Yet it is perhaps important to stress that the problem is not with the notion of therapy *as such*, nor even with specific therapies which often are of real benefit. Instead, the problem lies in the contemporary tendency to focus religious aspirations on the possibilities of therapy, as though therapy could resolve the problems of the human condition. It is also important to recall that contemporary society and culture disclose an excess of concern with the self in any number of other ways besides the overt preoccupation with therapy. Our rapt fascination with science and technology suggests that we are eager to be impressed by anything that promises to expand the boundaries of our experience. More ominously, we appear to be committed to the project of using technology to redefine human experience *as such*. The technologies of birth control and abortion are, for example, most often advocated by those who would, in the name of equality, social justice, or other typically modern liberal values, re-design human sexuality and the relations between men, women, and children. Indeed, sexuality and procreation, once understood in terms of created nature, are today increasingly construed in terms of “gender,” “sexual preference,” “lifestyle,” in short, they are envisioned only as social constructs and conventions which may be redesigned at any time to suit our changing tastes and preferences. Modern politics, furthermore, is fast becoming simply the “politics of felt need” in which various groups of individuals compete with one another for recognition and subsidy from an increasingly therapeutic state. And the so-called “consumer revolution” presupposes a mass audience who view consumption as a means toward the end of self-realization. Indeed, a veritable identity industry has emerged in recent years in response to consumer demand for products and services designed to help us discover and improve ourselves. If there has been a triumph of the therapeutic in contemporary culture, then this cannot simply be blamed upon secular psychological theorists or upon the emergence of the so-called helping professions, but it reflects an entire cultural ethos characterized by profound *self*-centeredness.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 25:1-22; 1 Timothy 1:1-17

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CHARLES SPURGEON

Lord, teach us to be resigned to your will;
teach us to delight in your law;
teach us to have no will but your will;
teach us to be sure that everything you do is good—
is the very best that can be done.
Help us to leave our concerns in your divine hands,
being persuaded that you have sway even over evil;
that out of it you bring good, and better still,
and better still in infinite progression,
till your high purposes shall develop in your own perfect glory,
and in the perfect bliss of all those who put their trust in you. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Tuesday April 2

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 28:1-4, 29-41; John 7:25-52

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF RICHARD BAXTER

O most great, most just and gracious God,
 you are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,
 you condemn the ungodly, impenitent, and unbelievers;
but you have promised mercy through Jesus Christ to all who repent and believe in him.
We confess that we were conceived in sin,
 and are by nature children of wrath;
 and have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.
In our baptism you took us into the bond of the holy covenant,
 but we did not remember our Creator in the days of our youth,
 with the fear, and love, and obedience which we owed you.
We did not please and glorify you in all things,
 nor walk with you by faith in a heavenly conversation,
 nor serve you fervently with all our might;
instead we fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the carnal mind.
We have neglected and abused your holy worship,
 your holy name,
 and your holy day.
We have dishonoured our superiors, and neglected our inferiors.
We have dealt unjustly and uncharitably with our neighbours,
 not loving them as ourselves,
 nor doing to others as we would they should do to us;
we have not sought first your kingdom and righteousness
 and been contented with our daily bread,
but have been careful and troubled about many things,
 neglecting the one thing necessary. ...
But in your mercy, your Son, and your promises is our hope.
Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father.
Be reconciled to us,
 and let the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us from all our sins.
Take us for your children,
 and give us the Spirit of your Son.
Sanctify us wholly,
shed abroad your love in our hearts
 and cause us to love you with all our hearts.
Make your face to shine upon your servants;
 save us from our sins,
 and from the wrath to come. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – VIDEO

Watch this short video and spend some time in contemplation of what you've learned.

thebibleproject.com/explore/bad-word-series → watch the “iniquity” video

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 29:38-30:16; 1 Timothy 1:18-2:15

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN KNOX

O heavenly Father,
grant that we may bestow this day wholly in your service,
so that all our thoughts, words, and deeds
 may redound to the glory of your Name
 and good example to all men,
 who, seeing our good works,
 may glorify you our heavenly Father.

And since of your mere favor and love
 you have not only created us in your own similitude and likeness,

but also have chosen us to be heirs with your dear Son Jesus Christ,
of that immortal kingdom which you prepared for us
before the beginning of the world,
we ask you to increase our faith and knowledge,
and to lighten our hearts with your Holy Spirit,
so that we may in the meantime live in godly conversation and integrity of life. Amen

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Wednesday April 3

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 32:1-35; John 8:1-30

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Thou art my living God,
my holy Christ,
my merciful Lord,
my great King,
my good Shepherd,
my Teacher of truth,
my seasonable help,
my Beloved beautiful beyond all men,
my living Bread,
my Priest for ever,
my Guide and Leader to my fatherland,
my true light,
my heavenly sweetness,
my straight way,
my wisdom full of illumination,
my stainless simplicity,
my peacemaking reconciliation,
my safe protection,
my good portion,
my everlasting salvation,
my great compassion,
my all-enduring patience,
my immaculate Victim,
my holy redemption,
my unfailing hope,
my perfect charity,
my holy resurrection,
my eternal life,
my exultation,
and my most blessed life,

Who shalt endure for evermore.

Thee I beseech, implore, and beg,
that Thou wouldest complete the work Thy mercy has begun in me; ...

O God, Thou Fount and Origin,
Bestower and Preserver of all virtues,
increase in me, I beseech Thee,
true faith,
unfailing hope,
and perfect charity;
profound humility,
invincible patience,
and perpetual chastity of body and of mind.

Give me prudence,
justice,
fortitude,
and temperance;

discretion in all things,
and a watchful sensibility,
that I may wisely make discernment between good and evil,
between the right hand and the left. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 238–241). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK



Antonio Ciseri, *Ecce Homo (Behold the Man)*, oil on canvas, 1871

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" – John 19:4-6

This painting gives us an unusual "behind the scenes" look at a popular painting subject. Instead of placing the viewer in the midst of the crowd, Ciseri places the viewer on the balcony with Jesus and Pilate. Instead of a passionate mob, we see the indifferent figures of Pilate's household and the soldiers. Pilate's wife, who we know told Pilate "don't have anything to do with that innocent man," turns away.

Although we cannot see the faces of Christ and Pilate, our eye is immediately drawn to them as the central players in this scene.

1. How does this painting add depth to your understanding of this day?
2. Although Jesus is surrounded by people, he is very alone in this painting. When have you felt alone, abandoned, or betrayed by those closest to you? Did you turn to God at this time?
3. Many in the crowd below would have been swept away by a mob mentality. When in your life have you felt influenced by others? What were the consequences, both immediately and later on? How did you feel?

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 33:1-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

You are holy, Lord God, who alone works wonders.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are most high.

You are the Almighty King,

you, holy Father, King of heaven and earth.

You are the Lord God Triune and One;
 all good.
You are good, all good, highest good,
Lord God living and true.
You are charity, love.
You are wisdom.
You are humility.
You are patience.
You are security.
You are quietude.
You are joy and gladness.
You are justice and temperance.
You are all riches to sufficiency.
You are beauty.
You are meekness.
You are protector.
You are guardian and defender.
You are strength.
You are refreshment.
You are our hope.
You are our faith.
You are our great sweetness.
You are our eternal life,
 great and admirable Lord,
 God Almighty,
 merciful Saviour. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Thursday April 4

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 34:1-35; John 8:31-59

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF D A CARSON

*We confess, Lord God,
that in a digital world full of countless material blessings,
in a world of nuclear physics and an astonishingly fast pace,
it takes an effort to think our way through these passages. [Gen. 1-2]
But we begin to glimpse that you are the sovereign God
to whom we owe everything.
The very heart of our rebellion is the desire to be God instead of you,
to run things ourselves,
to barter with you.
We make messes that are damaging to ourselves,
to our family,
to the culture at large,
and to the relationships among nations,
everything from petty one-upmanship to racism and genocide and everything in between.*

*Yet at the heart of all of it, we confess, is this horrendous rebellion,
this idolatry that demands that we be our own gods.
Open our eyes, Lord God,
that we may see your sovereign independence,
your glory,
your patience with us so that we are not destroyed,
the way you took time across countless generations
to show what a gracious sovereign God you are
until in the fullness of time you sent your own Son
to be the Lamb of God who really does take away our sin.
Open our eyes and our hearts, Lord God,
that we may be drawn inescapably to him. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (p. 54). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Heintzman, P. (2015). *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*. (W. A. Dyrness & R. K. Johnston, Eds.) (pp. 177–179). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group.

The Free-Time Concept of Leisure

The discretionary or free-time approach to conceptualizing leisure simply reduces leisure to a quantity of time. To conceive of leisure as free time is both limiting and confusing. While leisure is associated with freedom, freedom cannot be broken up into blocks of time. Dahl noted, “Free time is an alien and spurious notion to any Christian who reflects theologically upon the details and dynamics of his life.” All of a Christian’s time is free since life is a free gift, given by God

and intended to be freely accepted by the people of God. Therefore we cannot earn free time, for all of our time is freely given apart from any work on our part. At the same time none of our time is free, for it all comes under the Lordship of Christ, whether we are working or engaged in recreation. Free time implies that when a person is not working or otherwise obligated, one may do whatever one desires. But a Christian is not free to do anything one desires during non-work hours, for all of one's time is to be offered to God. In his discussion of Christian freedom, Luther characterized the Christian as always living simultaneously in total freedom and total responsibility.² A person cannot break up his or her life into distinct periods, some of which are regarded as free and others that are not. Therefore, for the Christian the notion of free time is not very helpful.

At least three problems arise from the attempt to define leisure as free time. First, the equation of leisure with free time is at the same time too broad and too narrow. It is too broad if it refers to all the time except for that time in which we are engaged in paid employment. Much of the time we spend away from our jobs is still devoted to work-related activities, such as household maintenance. Yet the notion of free time is too narrow if it implies that leisure is only the residual time left over after one has fulfilled all the obligations that contemporary life demands of a person. If this concept is brought to its logical conclusion, there would be almost no leisure, for if one completed all the expected role responsibilities of every area of one's life, the residual time would be minimal. As we saw in chapter 2, many people today are so busy that they simply discover they have no such thing as free time. Although some people may devote less time to paid employment than did people in the past, many are busy with other duties. Since these people frequently have an incomplete and misleading understanding of what leisure is, often equating it with free time, they conclude that they do not have any leisure.

Likely the only people in today's society who have plenty of free time are those in hospitals or prisons, and those involuntarily unemployed or retired. However, except for some of those retired it would be wrong to describe the situation of the people in these groups as free, and it definitely cannot be termed leisure.

The second problem of defining leisure entirely in terms of time is that it does not give any normative guidance for leisure. While the notion of free time is helpful in presenting sociological data on the uses of time, such as was done in chapter 2, it implies nothing about the moral direction of leisure. The concept of free time runs counter to responsible involvement in our interdependent society. Free time assumes that people's work is their only real responsibility and implies that when people are not working, they can spend their time doing anything they desire to do. However, this is neither realistic nor desirable in our increasingly complex and interdependent society. Sociologist Bennett Berger maintained that sociology "has taught us that no time is free of normative constraints."⁴ While freedom and nonobligation are associated with leisure, discretionary time cannot be removed from the context of responsibility to God for our use of time. All time and activities are to be brought under God's sovereignty.

Third, to conceptualize leisure entirely in terms of time misses so much of the qualitative dimension of leisure described in Scripture: the spiritual attitude of rest, joy, freedom, and the rejoicing in God and the gift of his creation inculcated by the Sabbath, along with the quality of life characterized by rest, peace, abundant life, and freedom available to us in Jesus Christ as we saw in chapters 5 and 6. Not everything one does in one's discretionary time can be claimed to be leisure. Nevertheless, discretionary time or quantitative leisure may be used to develop and nurture the qualitative dimension of leisure as Nelvin Vos explained.

Free time is only potentially a time of experiencing leisure. Rather than emphasizing time itself, we should focus on the person. Leisure depends not only on available time, but also on the

person's freedom to experience all time qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Leisure is not a matter so much of time, free or otherwise, but rather is a quality of living, a way of looking at life. The time remaining after work and other obligations can be called discretionary time but not leisure. Discretionary time may be used in a variety of ways: it may remain as empty idleness, be filled with unproductive activities or the consumption of material goods, or used to cultivate and nurture the qualitative dimension of leisure. Therefore free time is only potential leisure.

In summary, free time is an element of leisure, but leisure should not be limited to segments of time. Yet freedom from work and other obligations is definitely an essential dimension of leisure. In chapter 5 we saw that, at one level, the creation of the Sabbath suggests that we need periods of time each week that are free from both work and all other work-related activities. Exodus 34:21a reads, "Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest." In addition, both the Mosaic legislation and the prophets stressed that no work is to be done on the Sabbath. The Sabbath taught that Israel's life, in addition to work, also possessed the element of free time. At this level the Sabbath was a quantity of time in which no work was performed. Likewise, leisure, in a quantitative sense, is a period of time in which no work is performed.

Yet we also saw that the Sabbath was more than a quantity of time in which no work was to be performed. The Old Testament taught that the Sabbath was to be observed not only by a cessation from work but also by a rest that was of the nature of worship. So while there is the necessity to have periods of time free from work and work-related activities in our lives, this is not the totality of leisure.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 35:20-36:7; 1 Timothy 4:1-16

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CLEMENT OF ROME

O merciful and compassionate,
forgive us our iniquities,
and unrighteousness,
and transgressions,
and shortcomings.

Do not reckon every sin of your servants,
but cleanse us with the cleansing of your truth,
and guide our steps to walk in holiness of heart,
to do the things which are good and pleasing before you and before our rulers.

Lord, make your face to shine upon us in peace for our good
so that we may be sheltered by your mighty hand,
and delivered from all sin by your uplifted arm,
and deliver us from those who hate us wrongfully.

Give concord and peace to us and to all who dwell on the earth,
as you gave to our fathers who called on you in holiness with faith and truth,
and grant that we may be obedient to your almighty and glorious name,
and to our rulers and governors upon the earth. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Friday April 5

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 40:17-38; John 9:1-41

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

The day demands that we begin in praise of you,
for the day is yours and we are yours;
we could not live the day without reference to you,
without your gifts,
without your commands.

We begin with praise,
for the gift of life,
for the gift of our life together,
for the gift of life in your world
with all your beloved creatures,
for the gift of life in your church
with your steady recital of wonders.

You, you alone, only you,
you who made and makes and remakes heaven and earth,
you who executes justice and gives food we know not how,
you who sets prisoners free and sights the blind,
you who lifts up and watches and upholds,
you who reigns forever,
you ... and therefore us.

You, except we turn to lesser trusts,
all of us with our trust in the powers,

You, except we turn to ignoble aims,
all of us preoccupied with ourselves.

You, except we invest in our little controls and our larger fears,
all of us marked by anxiety.

And then we watch as you ease us out of anxiety,
as you heal our selves turned new,
as you topple powers and bring new chances
for truthful public life.

You ... except ... but then finally, always, everywhere you ...
and us on the receiving end.

And we are grateful. Amen.

On reading Psalm 146, the day Milosovich fell in Belgrade, Campbell Seminar / October 16, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 8). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – MUSIC

Meditate and reflect on [Living Hope](#) as sung by Phil Wickham (available on youtube.com). Listen to the song a couple of times, leaving space in between to reflect and pray as the Lord leads you.

How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Jesus, Yours is the victory, whoa!
Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain

There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Jesus Christ, my living hope
Oh God, You are my living hope
(music by Phil Wickham)

End by using this song as part of your prayer and consider these words throughout your day.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Leviticus 6:8-30; 1 Timothy 5:1-25

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN KNOX

We make our prayers to you, O Lord God, most merciful Father,
for all people in general,
that you will be known to be the Savior of all the world
by the redemption purchased by your only Son Jesus Christ;
even so that such as have been until now held captive in darkness and ignorance
for lack of the knowledge of the gospel
may, through the preaching thereof,
and the clear light of your Holy Spirit,

be brought into the right way of salvation,
which is to know that you are only very God,
and that he, whom you have sent, is Jesus Christ.
Likewise, we pray that they whom you have already endued with your grace,
and illuminated their hearts with the knowledge of your Word,
may continually increase in godliness,
and be plenteously enriched with spiritual benefits;
so that we may altogether worship you,
both with heart and mouth,
and render due honor and service unto Christ
our Master, King, and Lawmaker. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Saturday April 6

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Leviticus 19:1-18, 30-37; John 10:1-21

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Suffer me therefore, O Lord Jesus Christ,
to gaze on Thy unspeakable mercy,
and to tell abroad Thy sweetness and goodness
towards the sinful and the wretched.
I have said it already, but O, it delights me much,
whenever fit occasion offers,
to make remembrance of Thy sweetness
and Thy grace to sinners,
and to say how great they are.
For, out of love for sinners and for their redemption—
not merely sinners who are sinners more or less,
but sinners who are sinful beyond measure, if only they repent—
Thou camest down from the Bosom of the Father,
Thou didst enter the Virgin's womb,
didst take true flesh of her,
and living in the world didst call all sinners to penance,
at last didst endure the gibbet of the Cross for them,
and dying thus according to the flesh,
didst restore to them the life which by their sin they had justly lost.
Therefore, when I consider the evil deeds that I have done,
I am sure that I shall be lost,
if Thou shouldst please to judge me according to my deserts;
but, when I consider that death of Thine
which Thou didst undergo for the redemption of sinners,
I do not despair of Thy mercy. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 77–78). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – HISTORY

Publication of the King James Bible (1611)

A team of scholars produced an English Bible translation unsurpassed in linguistic beauty and longevity.

“To the most high and mighty Prince James by the Grace of God.” So begins the dedication in the most popular English Bible of all time, the Authorized Version, widely known as the King James Version. The much-loved KJV, as it is often abbreviated, may have fallen out of favor in recent years as more readable translations have been published for twentieth-century readers. But generation after generation of readers has absorbed its phrases. We can safely say that no other translation will ever have such an effect on the English language.

King James

Who was the “mighty Prince James” whose name has been stamped on millions of Bibles? He was the son of Mary Queen of Scots, executed by her half-sister, England’s Queen Elizabeth I. When the childless Elizabeth died, James, next male in the royal line, and already king in his native Scotland, marched south to London to be crowned king of England too. He is known to history as James I of England and James VI of Scotland.

Under Elizabeth, the Church of England had assumed an episcopal form of Protestantism. The growing number of Puritans felt Elizabeth had created a “compromise” church that wasn’t Protestant enough. They wanted to “purify” the church of anything that resembled Catholicism, including bishops, clerical garb, and high ritual. Before James had even reached London, the Puritans presented him with the Millenary Petition (so called because it had a thousand signatures), asking for moderate changes in the Church of England.

But James liked the Church of England’s episcopal structure and its title for the king, “Defender of the Faith.” James was, in fact, rather pretentious and committed to the idea that kings ruled by divine decree. (His contemporaries called him “the wisest fool in Christendom” and snickered that he was hardly the person to insist on kings’ divine rights.) James agreed to a conference, which met in January 1604 at Hampton Court. Here, however, James warned the Puritans that if they did not conform, he would “harry them out of the land.” The conference was a failure for the Puritans, except on one point: James gave his approval to the making of a new translation of the Bible.

Translation or Revision?

James wanted something to replace the popular Geneva Bible. This 1560 version was much loved by the people (and probably the version Shakespeare read), yet it had a perceived Calvinistic slant, something James didn’t like. The Puritans, meanwhile, disliked the Bishops’ Bible, an authorized 1568 version read in churches but not widely accepted by the common folk. England needed one version that both churches and individuals, and both the Church of England and the Puritans, could read with benefit.

In 1607, James appointed nearly fifty scholars and divided them into six companies. For two years and nine months they worked individually and in conference, and then the whole text was gone over by a committee of twelve. While the scholars used the original Hebrew and Greek, they closely followed previous translations. In fact, it may be inappropriate to call the King James Version a translation. As the “Preface of the Translators” explains, it is more accurately a revision of earlier versions. For example, the work of William Tyndale, the first major English translator, is evident in many passages.

The KJV has been called the “Authorized Version,” although, oddly, no proof has survived that James formally approved it. Officially, the new version was “appointed to be read in churches,” replacing the Bishops’ Bible. But it was a long time before it replaced the Geneva Bible as the Bible of the individual reader.

Bible English

Once established, however, the KJV was unshakable. Even though some critics said its language was archaic in the very year it appeared, later generations loved its “Bible English.” As the language evolved, becoming less and less like the language of James’s day, English-speaking Christians continued to express themselves in terms echoing the KJV. For example, many Christians still address God as “Thee” and “Thou.”

And how the language has been affected! Even if the KJV were to someday go out of print—which is unlikely—our language still bulges with such immortal expressions as “the skin of my teeth,” “Woe is me!” “a drop in the bucket,” “my brother’s keeper,” “holier than thou,” and many others.

But the effect goes beyond phrases. There is a cadence, a sentence rhythm, in the KJV that has never been matched in other English Bibles. If this beauty has detracted some readers from hearing the message, it has nevertheless been incredibly memorable and, therefore, memorizable. If learning Scripture is important, then committing it to memory is paramount, and we know that poetry—or poetic prose—is easier to memorize than flat prose. Today, almost four hundred years later, most people who can quote the Bible quote a version published in 1611.

Modern-day translators may rightly feel humble, knowing they can never produce a work that will so mold a language and shape an entire culture.

[Publication of the King James Bible (1611). (1990). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History.*]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Leviticus 25:1-24; 1 Timothy 6:1-21

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord our God,
whose Son taught his holy apostles
that those who would be great must first be servants,
give to your Church this servant heart,
that any glory we seek will be to your name
and our triumph only in the cross of your Son.
May no act of love come to be regarded as beneath us.
We ask this in the name of the one who humbled himself
to reveal your saving presence among us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 40). London: SPCK.]

Week 6

Sunday April 7 – Saturday April 13

Memory Verse for the Week

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

Matthew 7:7-11 (ESV)

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Planning Ahead – This Week’s Events:

Worship Services	-----	Sun Apr 7, 10:00am & 5:00pm
Morning Prayer	-----	Mon/Wed, 7:00am & Fri, 8:00am
Encounter	-----	Fri Apr 12, 6:00pm

Sunday April 7

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Exodus 2:23-3:20; Mark 10:32-45

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

God sovereign and generous,
who commands the rise and fall of the nations,
who calls and has chosen many peoples,
who weeps when they harm each other,
who haunts every local culture—including ours—
with your will for well-being,
who draws close to the powerless and
surprises with power via weakness ...

You are the one whom we praise in astonishment,
we adore in gladness,
we thank in gratitude ...

for who you are,
for what you do,
for how you hope.

Look with mercy on us this day,
on all the churches we serve and love,
on all the people we name,
on all the communities so fragile in which
we are embedded.

Look with your mercy, and we will obey you all the day long.

In the name of Jesus who obeyed fully. Amen.

On reading Isaiah 19:23–25, lecture by Thomas Thangaraj / October 11, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 10). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – GATHERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICES, 10:00 AM AND 5:00 PM

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Exodus 6:2-13; Mark 15:22-39

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call a rich tapestry of people to follow you
and challenge us with a new commandment
to imitate your love.

Give to us the gift of your grace
to fulfil this calling with joy and gladness,
that the world may rejoice in your praise.

Make us one as you are one
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
eternal Trinity, now and for ever. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 43). London: SPCK.]

Monday April 8

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 6:1-27; John 10:22-42

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF DA CARSON

*We rejoice, heavenly Father, in the truth that Jesus rose from the dead.
Yet we begin to see that this is not simply a truth in the public arena of history
to be absorbed quickly
and then set to one side.
For if indeed your dear Son,
the God-man,
rose from the dead,
then everything is changed.
His victory over death is confirmed.
The sacrifice he provided has been vindicated.
Already he is the head of a new humanity
that will one day share in his resurrection-likeness.
And his people, heavenly Father, rejoice to bow before him and cry,
“My Lord and my God.”
Grant that each one who reads these pages may cry,
“Forgive my sin as you forgave the sin of that paralyzed man,
my Lord and my God.”
In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* (p. 167). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Moreland, J. P., & Issler, K. (2006). *The Lost Virtue of Happiness: Discovering the Disciplines of the Good Life* (pp. 51–58). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

TWO FRIENDS: SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

The disciplines of solitude and silence are absolutely fundamental to the Christian life, and they are naturally practiced in tandem. In solitude we choose to be alone and to reflect on how we experience the facets of life (family, job, relationship with God, finances) and what they mean to us while in isolation. We unhook from companionship with others; we take ourselves physically and mentally out of our social, familial, and other human relationships.

We all have a false self—a person we tend to project that is not who we really are. The false self is a combination of social roles, others’ expectations, our own strategies to be safe or to receive recognition, and our various inauthentic attachments to others and our environment (work, home, gym). The false self is enslaving and takes a lot of emotional and spiritual energy to sustain. It is a fragmented self, torn apart by the various competing voices that seek to shape it. The false self actually produces loneliness because—perhaps subconsciously—it reflects the belief that before one can be acceptable, one must put on a false identity and perform for others. The true self remains hidden and, therefore, lonely. Because we are often afraid of experiencing our thoughts and emotions, we become addicted to sounds (e.g., music, television). And soon, when we fill our lives with noise, it becomes difficult to be quiet enough to listen to what’s going

on inside of us or to God's still, small voice. Unfortunately, we cannot accurately hear others—God or loved ones—if we have not heard from ourselves.

Solitude is a way of breaking these attachments, even if briefly. By stepping outside the false self, we feel our true self in relationship to various aspects of our lives, especially in relationship to our distorted images of God. We can thereby learn how the false self has distorted those aspects. We are then in a better position to reenter our daily lives and make progress in becoming an authentic person. The true self that emerges from practicing isolation from others develops an inner solitude, a quality of being centered and quiet. Henri Nouwen put it this way:

It is probably difficult, if not impossible, to move from loneliness to solitude without any form of withdrawal from a distracting world.... The solitude that really counts is the solitude of heart; it is an inner quality or attitude that does not depend on physical isolation. On occasion this isolation is necessary to develop this solitude of heart, but it would be sad if we considered this essential aspect of the spiritual life as a privilege of monks and hermits. It seems more important than ever to stress that solitude is one of the human capacities that can exist, be maintained and developed in the center of a big city, in the middle of a large crowd and in the context of a very active and productive life. A man or woman who has developed this solitude of heart is no longer pulled apart by the most divergent stimuli of the surrounding world but is able to perceive and understand this world from a quiet inner center.

Because a person can learn to practice solitude in the anonymity of a crowd, silence is not necessary for practicing solitude, but it is a very useful aspect of it. Silence involves two things: First, a person closes off from sounds and seeks a quiet place. Second, he or she does not communicate with others.

How can we learn to practice solitude and silence? It is important to find activities that work for you. Realizing that there is no “thus saith the Lord” in this, we have found these ideas to be immensely helpful to our dear friends and to us.

First, remember that when you go into solitude and silence, your basic goal is to do nothing. Yes, nothing! You are to center yourself in quiet and rest. As you do that, you also focus on centering your affections on the Lord and His creation. This is not a time to catch up on your scheduled daily Bible reading or on anything else. In fact, if possible, the first thing you should do when engaging in solitude is to take off your watch.

Second, there are different occasions for entering solitude. Here are three suggestions:

1. *Form the habit of practicing* for an hour on two or three nights a week. After watching the evening news or before your favorite television program comes on (it is unrealistic to start by cutting off all television or all your ordinary habits—start modestly until a habit is formed), say from seven to eight o'clock, go to a favorite quiet place in your house or go for a walk. Some change of location, however small, is very helpful.

2. *Practice driving in the slow lane* with the radio and cell phone turned off. In all honesty, I have found that my commute to work (around thirty-five minutes one way) has been one of the most important places for my spiritual development in my weekly schedule. Practicing solitude while driving can make traffic a joy and your car a cathedral. Of special focus should be how you experience pressure from drivers who push you to go faster. We get in touch with how close to the surface our anger is, how easily we are manipulated by social pressure, and how quickly we project our feelings onto others. These insights are worth the price of admission, because one of the key benefits of solitude is that when we unhook from our support systems, our defective strategies for coping with life and our negative feelings that lie just beneath the surface manifest themselves. Then we have a chance to feel and think about them and invite Jesus to give wisdom and support in developing healthier habits and strategies.

3. *Once or twice a year, go alone on a solitude retreat* from 9 a.m. one day until 5 p.m. the next. Go to a retreat center that has as one of its purposes the provision of a place for individual sojourners. Try to find a center that has gardens, fountains, statues, and other forms of beautiful artwork. In our experience, Catholic retreat centers are usually ideal for solitude retreats.

We recommend that you arrive at the center at about nine so you will have a full morning ahead of you yet won't have to get up so early that you are tired your first day. (By the way, if you need a nap on your retreat, by all means take one.) Take a Bible, notebook, and hymnal. But remember, a solitude retreat is not a time to catch up on reading; it is a time for quiet, reflection, and worship. We also recommend that you bring photos of your loved ones and a picture of Jesus. That way, your loved ones and the Lord Jesus can become steady objects of focus and love.

After checking in, stay in your room, get on your knees for around fifteen to thirty minutes, and dedicate the next thirty-two hours to God. When you kneel, be sure it is in a comfortable place. If you kneel at your bedside, open the Bible to a favorite passage, read it a few times, and pray it to Jesus. If you cannot kneel or walk, then sit or lie comfortably with the palms of your hands facing up, expressing to God that you are hungry to receive from Him. Then get up and go for a long, slow, quiet walk. If possible, walk where there are beautiful sounds and sights (for example, near fountains, flowers, a stream, or a beautiful statue).

As you quiet down, certain things will surface: anxious thoughts, worries about things you need to get done, tensions with work, family, or responsibilities. Don't fight them. If you fight against them, they will overwhelm you like an ocean wave, and you will become fixated on them. Just let them roll through your body, mind, and emotions. Pray about your concerns and, after a while, stop to look at a flower or to listen to a fountain. Or gaze at a statue of Jesus. Or let some pleasant thought, feeling, or memory run through your mind over and over again.

While focusing on some beautiful object or some pleasant memory, let joy and thanksgiving for the object or memory well up within you. Begin to sing a song to God. Take a passage you have memorized and that you dearly love and pray it over and over to God. Use this as an occasion to pause and give thanks for specific aspects of your life, from the wonderful taste of coffee to more important matters. As concerns spring up, talk again to Jesus about that. If you can't get worries off your mind, we suggest that you schedule time later on your first day, such as one hour before dinner, to do nothing but focus in prayer and meditation on your worries. That way, if a concern threatens to overwhelm you, you can tell yourself you will face it later.

After an hour or so, go back to your room and journal on whatever comes to your mind and heart. Then get back to praying, reading Scripture, singing, or meditating again for thirty minutes. When finished, sit in a comfortable chair and begin reading a book of the Bible. We recommend that you make it your goal to read an entire gospel during your retreat, not necessarily at one sitting. Read until you desire to stop, but be sure to pause repeatedly during your reading to pray, sing, or journal.

Move back and forth between (1) prayer and meditation on your knees (or with your palms facing up); (2) sitting (or lying) comfortably while journaling or reading Scripture; (3) walking (or viewing a pictorial book on nature) and pausing at beautiful sights that arrest your attention. This will form the staple of your entire solitude retreat. At various times, go into the chapel and worship. During the retreat, if it is not distracting, evaluate the past twelve to eighteen months of your life and set some modest goals for the next six months. Be sure to include some habit changes. Make the goals reasonable. And don't feel guilty if you get sleepy from time to time. Be sure to take naps if needed.

We also recommend that you don't fast on the retreat. Trying to combine fasting with solitude can be too difficult and joyless if you are not used to them. Take some snacks along to enjoy, but don't use them to fill your empty self. One purpose of the solitude retreat is to get in touch with

that emptiness. Let snacking be a source of modest joy and an occasion for thankfulness for tastes; don't let it be a way of inordinately comforting or rewarding yourself.

Finally, remember that learning to do almost anything is hard in the early stages, and solitude and silence are no exception. But people trained in these disciplines develop boundaries, a sense of being centered, and an awareness of their true self so they can more healthily enter into mutually serving, loving relationships and more authentic labor as they live their daily life. Remember, Jesus himself frequently engaged in solitude and silence (see Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). As His students in the school of life, it only makes sense that we follow Him in these activities.

In the early 1990s, newspapers across America carried a story with these words:

A flurry of recent survey research has found that, contrary to the secularism of popular culture, Americans believe in God and identify themselves as strongly religious. But analysts who have studied the data say that the spirituality of many Americans might be only skin-deep. "Our biggest problem is not secular humanism, but interest in religion that doesn't turn into commitment in every day life," said Martin Marty, a prominent US church historian.

Spiritual disciplines are practical means for learning how to grow in self-denial. Far from being bad news, the challenge to practice spiritual disciplines is good news. Disciplines are practices for gaining happiness. They are part of a heartfelt and thoughtful Christian life preoccupied with the living God.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 9:15-23, 10:29-36; Titus 1:1-2:8

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF CHARLES SPURGEON

Gracious God,
we praise you with our whole hearts for the wondrous revelation of your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
We think every day of his passion,
For all our hope lies in his death.
But as often as we think on it,
we are still filled with astonishment
that you should so love the world
as to give your only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have everlasting life;
that heaven's eternal darling should come to earth to be made a man,
and in manhood's form to be despised and rejected
of the very men whom he came to bless;
and then should be made to bear the sin of many
and to be numbered with the transgressors,
and, being found in that number, to die a transgressor's death,
a felon's death upon the gibbet of the cross.
Give us more tenderness of heart,
give us to feel the wounds of Jesus till they wound our sins to death.
Give us to have a heart pierced even as his was,
with deep sympathy for his griefs,
and an all-consuming love for His blessed person. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Tuesday April 9

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 11:10-33; John 11:1-44

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

The witnesses tell us that your promises persist
and will come to fruition;
We find that retelling of such promises deeply compelling
in our own lives.
You are the God who reached our family not yet formed.
You uttered promise and sent father Abraham on his daring way.
You assured mother Sarah of impossibility
and sent her laughing in disbelief.
You hoped them to new land,
and since have been giving sons and daughters and
futures and possibilities,
beyond all that we can hope or imagine.
We are the glad carriers and recipients of those promises.
We live each time from the trace of your future
that keeps surprising us with
gifts and chances and hopes.
But your promises seem so flimsy, so risky, so unsure.
We keep fashioning better guarantees.
We lie a little here and cheat a little there.
We add our own securities,
and then find that every land of promise
becomes a turf of killing dispute.
The promise fades; it feels more like we are on our own.
So do this yet today. Match the goodness of your promise
with the daring of our faith.
Let us trust beyond seeing,
risk beyond laughing,
yield beyond calculating.
By supper time give us the freedom that belongs to your “Yes,”
Your “Yes” we have seen fleshed in glad obedience. Amen.

On pondering promises / July 13, 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 34).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – VIDEO

Watch this short video and spend some time in contemplation of what you’ve learned.

thebibleproject.com/explore/sacrifice-atonement

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 12:1-16; Titus 2:9-3:15

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF JOHN WESLEY

Deliver me, O God,

from all idolatrous love of any creature.

I know infinite numbers have been lost to you,

by loving those creatures for their own sake,

which you permit, even command, to love subordinately to you.

Preserve me, I ask you, from all such blind affection;

be a guard to all my desires,

that they fix on no creature any farther

than the love of it tends to build me up in the love of you.

You require me to love you with all my heart;

I ask you that I may never open my heart to anything, but out of love to you.

Above all, deliver me, O my God, from all idolatrous self-love.

I know, O God, that this is the root of all evil.

I know you made me, not to do my own will, but yours.

I know, the very corruption of the devil is, the having a will contrary to yours.

O be my helper against this most dangerous of all idols,

that I may both discern all its subtleties,

and withstand all its force.

○ you who have commanded me to renounce myself, give me strength,
and I will obey your command.

My choice and desire is, to love myself, as all other creatures, in and for you.

○ let your almighty arm so establish, strengthen, and settle me,
that you may ever be the ground and pillar of all my love. Amen.

[Ritzema, E. (Ed.). (2012). *400 Prayers for Preachers*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Wednesday April 10

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33; John 11:45-57

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Redeemer and Saviour, 'Draw me after Thee.
Let not the world's charms entice me,
 but the sweetness of Thine own most blessed love allure me.
Time was I was drawn by my own vanity;
 but now let Thy truth draw me,
 draw me after Thee.
 Draw me, for Thou hast drawn;
 keep me, for Thou hast laid hold of me.
Thou didst draw me to redeem,
 draw me to save.
Thou didst draw me in Thy pity,
 draw me to Thy bliss.
Thou didst lay hold of me, appearing among us made Man for us;
 keep me,
 keep me, now that Thou rulest over heaven exalted above the angels.
It is Thy word,
Thy promise.
Thou hast promised, saying: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
 will draw all things to Myself' (St. John 12:32).
Draw me now, therefore,
Thou so mightily exalted,
 even as Thou hast allured me, so compassionately humbled. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (p. 14). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – ARTWORK

(See overleaf)

Rembrandt has very carefully made Christ the focal point in the image. He is drawn in detail, while those below Him are very basic in form, and those on the periphery are in shadow. He is higher than those on the ground and stands out from the other crosses. Even while hanging from the cross, He seems to be kingly. A beam of light comes from Heaven, illuminating Christ and washing out the others.

1. How is Jesus Christ the centre of your life today?
2. Place yourself in this scene. Imagine yourself as the repentant thief, the mourner, the scoffer. What do you see and feel?
3. Jesus willingly went to the cross for you. What implications does this have in your life?



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Christ Crucified between Two Thieves*, etching, 1653

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” – Luke 23:32-35

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 14:1-25; 2 Timothy 1:1-18

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER OF MENNO SIMONS

(Based on Psalm 25:4 – *“Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.”*)

O Lord of hosts,

I know through the word of thy grace that there is but one way which leadeth to life,
which is strait and narrow for the flesh,
beset with thorns and dangers all around,
and is found by few, and still fewer walk therein;
it is like a treasure hid in a field which none can find
but he to whom it is shown by the Spirit.

Dear Lord, there is no way but thou alone;

all who walk through thee will find the gates of life.

There is another way which seems very pleasant to the flesh,
which appears soft, smooth and broad,
strown with roses, pleasant and agreeable to the eye,
but its end leads to death.

On this way the whole world walks,

unconcerned and without fear,

and prefers things perishable to imperishable,

evil to good, and darkness to the light of the world.

They all walk on the perverse, broad and crooked way;

they become faint in the way of unrighteousness,

and know not the way of the Lord.

It is true, the way of error seems right in the eyes of fools,

but I know through thy Spirit and word that it is the certain road to the abyss of hell.

Therefore, I entreat thee, dear Lord,

be merciful to me a poor sinner;

show me thy path, and teach me thy way;

for thy way is the right way, godly, pleasant, humble, chaste,

full of peace and of all good,

and will lead my soul to eternal life. Amen.

(<https://jeremyberg.wordpress.com/2017/10/27/praying-a-psalm-with-menno-simons/>)

Thursday April 11

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 16:1-35; John 12:1-19

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER OF D A CARSON

Open our eyes, Lord God,

*so that we can see the eternal significance
of the glorious gospel of Christ.*

*Help us to see that the terrors found in this world,
the threats and torments*

*displayed often enough across the history of the world,
are nothing compared to the wrath of the Lamb.*

We face a choice:

*either we will live our lives frightened of people
and what they think,*

people who at most can do a little damage to us in this world,

*or we will live our lives in submissive fear of him who can destroy body and soul in hell—
and justly so.*

O Lord God, help us to turn to our only escape,

*to him who bore our sin with its guilt and penalty
in his own body on the tree*

that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Help us to sing with that old converted slave trader, John Newton,

*I saw One hanging on a tree
In agony and blood;
He fixed His loving eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.*

*My conscience felt and owned the guilt
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And helped to nail Him there.*

*A second look He gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive:
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou may'st live."*

*Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon, too.*

*O can it be, upon a tree,
The Savior died for me?
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled,
To think He died for me!*

Lord God, be merciful to me, a sinner. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[Carson, D. A. (2010). *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (p. 211). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – READING

Peterson, E. H. (2006). *Living the Resurrection: The Risen Christ in Everyday Life* (pp. 31–40). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF WONDER

Unfortunately, we do not live in a world that promotes or encourages wonder. Wonder is natural and spontaneous to all of us. When we were children, we were in a constant state of wonder. The world was new, tumbling in on us in profusion. We staggered through each day fondling, looking, tasting. Words were wondrous. Running was wondrous. Touch, taste, sound were all wonders. We lived in a world of wonders.

But gradually the sense of wonder gets squeezed out of us. There are many reasons, but mostly the lessening of wonder takes place as we develop in competence and gain mastery over ourselves and our coordination and our environment.

The workplace, when we become adults, is where this diminishing of wonder goes on most consistently and thoroughly. It's difficult to cultivate a sense of wonder in the workplace. Knowledge and competence are the key values here. We don't want any surprises. We don't want to waste time just staring at something, wondering what to make of it. We're trained and then paid to know what we're doing.

...

Along the way, the primacy of God and his work gives way ever so slightly to the primacy of *our* work in God's kingdom. We begin to think of ways to use God in what we're doing. The shift is barely perceptible, for we continue to use the vocabulary of our new identity. We continue to believe the identical truths. We continue pursuing good goals. It usually takes a long time for the significance of the shift to show up. But when it does, it turns out that we have not so much been worshiping God as enlisting him as a trusted and valuable assistant.

On the job, we are dealing with what *we* know and what *we* are good at. What we know is our work. Why not ask God to help us in our work? He invited us to do it, didn't he? "Ask and you shall receive." Well, yes, he did. The problem is that taken out of the context of resurrection wonder, any prayer soon becomes an act of idolatry—reducing God to what we can use for our purposes, however noble and useful.

...

And then one day we realize that the "all things new" into which we have been introduced by Christ doesn't include our workplace. We're still in the same old dead-end job in which we've been stagnating for ten or twenty or thirty years. With our new energy and sense of unique identity and purpose sparked by our conversion, we look around for a way out. We fantasize jobs in which we can wholeheartedly work, in the wonderful phrase, "to the glory of God." A few people risk everything and break out. But most of us do not. We have a mortgage to pay or children to put through college. We don't have the training or schooling necessary. Our spouse is content just as things are and doesn't want to jeopardize the security of familiarity. And so we accept the fact that we're stuck and return to slogging through the daily mud and boredom of our routine.

CHRISTIAN IDOLATRY

But what we also do is look around for ways to affirm and cultivate our new life in Christ outside our workplace. And we soon find, quite to our delight, that there is a lot to choose from. A huge religious marketplace has been set up in North America to meet the needs and fantasies of people

just like us. There are conferences and gatherings custom-designed to give us the lift we need. There are books, videos, and seminars that promise to let us in on the Christian “secret” of whatever it is we feel is lacking in our life—financial security, well-behaved children, weight loss, sex, travel to holy sites, exciting worship, celebrity teachers. The people who promote these goods and services all smile a lot and are good-looking. *They* are obviously not bored.

It isn’t long before we’re standing in line to buy whatever is being offered. And because none of the purchases does what we had hoped for, or at least not for long, we’re soon back to buy another, and then another. The process is addicting. We become consumers of packaged spiritualities.

This also is idolatry. We never think of using this term because everything we’re buying or paying for is defined by the adjective *Christian*. But idolatry it is, nevertheless. It’s God packaged as a product—God depersonalized and made available as a technique or a program. The Christian market in idols has never been more brisk or lucrative. The late medieval indulgences that provoked Luther’s righteous wrath are small potatoes compared to what’s going on in our evangelical backyard.

AN INTOLERANCE OF MYSTERY

Every Christian man or woman who gets out of bed and goes to work walks into a world in which idolatry is the major temptation for seducing him or her away from the new life of being formed-by-resurrection into the likeness of Christ.

There are endless variations and combinations on these “good” and “bad” workplaces that I’ve sketched. But the probabilities of idolatry are ever-present if we work—and most of us do. (The obvious exceptions are children, the elderly, the disabled, and the unemployed.) We live most days and most of the hours of those days in a world permeated with the making and purchasing of idols.

..

That is why Christian formation—formation-by-resurrection—demands endless vigilance. The workplace is the arena in which idolatry is constantly being reconfigured by putting us in a position of control and giving us things and systems that enable us to exercise our skills and carry out our strategies in the world.

Wonder, that astonished willingness to stop what we’re doing, to stand still open-eyed, open-handed, ready to take in what is “more and other,” is not encouraged in the workplace.

THE CULTIVATION OF RESURRECTION WONDER

Does that mean that we put spiritual formation on hold during working hours and pick it up again after-hours and on weekends? I don’t think so.

For here is the striking thing: The opening scene in the resurrection of Jesus occurs in the workplace. Mary Magdalene and the other women were on their way to work when they encountered and embraced the resurrection of Jesus. I’m prepared to contend that the primary location for spiritual formation—for formation-by-resurrection—is in the workplace.

So how do we who work for a living and spend a huge hunk of our time each week in a workplace that is unfriendly to wonder cultivate wonder, the resurrection-wonder in which spiritual formation thrives?

To those who take the Bible seriously as the text for our spiritual formation, the answer is unequivocal: Keep the Sabbath holy. This is the focal practice set down in Scripture and practiced by the church in which to cultivate wonder.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 16:36-17:13; 2 Timothy 2:1-26

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
on the mountain top you gave your disciples
the great commission
to continue your work of reconciliation
and to draw all people to you,
to baptize and teach them in your way.
Bless us who are sent in your name.
Give us your grace
to be open to the questions that struggle to find expression,
the thirst that is unsure where to be refreshed
and the hunger that is scared to ask for bread.
Guide us as we seek to uncover the path of life and peace.
Shield us from the pride of disdain and contempt
that would think itself better than anyone else,
for all are equal in your sight,
and the treasure for which you died;
to the glory of the Father, through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 46). London: SPCK.]

Friday April 12

Encounter: Potluck dinner with Pastor Geoff & Sharon from 6pm

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 20:1-29; John 12:20-50

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

Contemplatio (Dwell, "marinate" in what has been spoken)

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

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

Incarnatio (Living it)

Consider how you will build what the Spirit has spoken/revealed into your life. (Even one idea is good!)

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray into what God has revealed to you. Intercession, adoration, repentance, thanksgiving, affirmation.
Pray prophetically for your day: "Lord Jesus, reveal your will to me in what the day holds."
Listen.

A PRAYER OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Our lives are occupied territory ...
 occupied by a cacophony of voices,
 and the din undoes us.
In the daytime we have no time to listen,
 beset as we are by anxiety and goals
 and assignments and work,
 and in the night the voices are so confusing
 we can hardly sort out what could possibly be your voice
 from the voice of our mothers and our fathers
 and our best friends and our pet projects,
 because they all sound so much like you.
We are people over whom that word *shema* has been written.
We are listeners, but we do not listen well.
So we bid you, by the time the sun goes down today
 or by the time the sun comes up tomorrow,
 by night or by day,
 that you will speak in ways that we can hear
 out beyond ourselves.
It is your speech to us that carries us where we have never been,
 and it is your speech to us that is our only hope.
So give us ears. Amen.

In anticipation of reading 1 Samuel 2–3 / 2000

[Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. (E. Searcy, Ed.) (p. 56).
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – MUSIC

Meditate and reflect on [Crown Him/Majesty](#) as sung by Chris Tomlin (available on youtube.com). Listen to the song a couple of times, leaving space in between to reflect and pray as the Lord leads you.

Crown Him with many crowns
The Lamb upon His throne
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own
Awake my soul and sing
Of Him who died for me

And hail Him as thy matchless King
 Through all eternity
 Majesty, Lord of all
 Let every throne before Him fall
 The King of kings, O come adore
 Our God who reigns forever more
 Crown Him Lord of life
 Who triumphed o'er the grave
 And rose victorious in the strife
 For those He came to save
 His glories now we sing
 Who died and rose on high
 Who died eternal life to bring
 And lives that death may die
 Majesty, Lord of all
 Let every throne before Him fall
 The King of kings, O come adore
 Our God who reigns forever more, forever more
 All hail, Redeemer, hail
 For He has died for me
 His praise and glory shall not fail
 Throughout eternity
 Majesty, Lord of all
 Let every throne before Him fall
 The King of kings, O come adore
 Our God who reigns forever more, forever more

End by using this song as part of your prayer and consider these words throughout your day.

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

The Ignatian Examen:

CONSOLATION. A source of thanks and growth in God.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 22:1-35; 2 Timothy 3:1-17

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Spirit of God,
strengthen me in the darkness of this hour.
Purify my heart that I may know my need
for your forgiveness and mercy.
Surround me with your protection
that no evil may assault my soul,
but I may trust in your prevailing goodness.
For the darkness is not dark to you
and the night is as bright as the day.
Let your light flood the shadows and hidden places,
bringing stillness and peace to all that is troubled,
in Jesus Christ, our risen, ascended and glorified Lord. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 69). London: SPCK.]

Saturday April 13

MORNING PRAYER

PERSONAL DEVOTION

Praeparatio (Preparation)

Silence.

- Where are you?
- Where is God?
- What is on your heart?

Come into His presence.

Lectio (Read)

Numbers 22:36-23:26; John 13:1-38

- Note words or phrases that stirred something in you.
- Decide on one as the Spirit leads and read that passage again.

(It is not purely subjective – what you sense or think must be consistent with a right understanding of the whole of Scripture)

Meditatio (Active thinking)

Examine the word/phrase that stirred you.

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

Read the passage again. Confirm what you have heard.

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

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Oratio (Prayer)

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

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

Listen.

A PRAYER EXCERPT OF ST ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

How, O Lord, shall I rejoice in a freedom of mine
 which is none other than the purchase of Thy bonds;
 Thine, who didst endure death that I might live?
What sort of gladness in my salvation can mine be,
 when that salvation is none other than the fruit of Thy griefs?
How shall I exult in a life of mine,
 which is mine only by Thy death?
Am I to rejoice in Thy sufferings,
 and in the cruelty of those who caused them?
For, indeed, Thou hadst not borne them,
 had not they inflicted them,
 and, hadst Thou not endured them,
 all these my blessings had not been.
And, on the other hand,
 if I grieve over the sufferings,
how shall I rejoice in the blessings for which the sufferings were undergone,
 and which would not have been had the sufferings not been?
Truth is, the wickedness that inflicted them was able to do nothing
 save as Thou didst willingly allow;
 nor didst Thou allow save as Thou didst mercifully will.
I must needs therefore execrate [loathe] the cruelty of those who caused Thy pains;
I must compassionate and imitate Thy death and Thy toils;
I must render Thee the homage of a thankful love
 for Thy merciful free choice in my behalf;
 and thus exult in safety and confidence in the benefits bestowed on me. Amen.

[Anselm, S., Archbishop of Canterbury. (1872). *Saint Anselm's Book of Meditations and Prayers* (pp. 146–147). London: Burns and Oates.]

DAILY ACTIVITY – HISTORY

The Great Awakening Peaks (1740)

A mighty wave of revival washed across North America, forever altering the religious landscape.

by MARK A. NOLL

In the fall of 1740, a farmer near Hartford, Connecticut, heard life-changing news. Nathan Cole was a conventionally religious man whose conscience had been increasingly troubled by an unmet need for God. The news was that the young revivalist George Whitefield would be preaching twelve miles away in Middletown. Immediately, as Cole later wrote, “I ... ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might,” and with his wife hastened to Middletown “as if we were fleeing for

our lives.” They arrived just in time to see Whitefield mount the scaffold that had been erected for his sermon. To Nathan Cole the young British evangelist “lookt almost angelical.” But it was Whitefield’s message that changed his life: “My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by Gods blessing my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.” After several more months, Cole was confident that he had been reconciled to a gracious God.



Jonathan Edwards, who interpreted the Awakening in his many writings, is considered by many the greatest theologian America has ever produced.

First Stirrings

Nathan Cole and his wife were among the thousands who thrilled to the message of George Whitefield at the high-water mark of America’s Great Awakening. But the roots of this revival extended deep in time before Whitefield, and its fruits could be observed for generations. First stirrings occurred during the early decades of the eighteenth century. Preaching aimed at “awakening” the spiritually sluggish or “harvesting” those with a new interest in God’s grace took place in New England Congregational churches, in Dutch Reformed congregations in New Jersey, and among scattered Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Solomon Stoddard (grandfather and predecessor of Jonathan Edwards as minister in Northampton, Massachusetts), Theodore Frelinghuysen (a Dutch minister trained by Continental Pietists), and several members of the Tennent family (Presbyterian immigrants from Northern Ireland) were the pioneers of this work.

Then, in the mid-1730s, the Northampton congregation that Edwards had inherited from his grandfather was deeply stirred by Edwards’ dramatic preaching on justification by faith. His account of this stirring, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton* (1737) was read widely in America and the British Isles and stimulated other ministers to look for similar renewal in their congregations.



George Whitefield stirring listeners in 1742 (engraving from Harper's Weekly, Sept. 9, 1865). He was the first modern evangelist to preach to large crowds outdoors. Benjamin Franklin estimated that Whitefield's commanding voice could be heard by 30,000 people.

Fiery Whitefield

General revival, however, awaited the arrival of Whitefield. This young Anglican had been a colleague of John and Charles Wesley and had already experimented with preaching out-of-doors in Britain. His nominal reason for being in America was to supervise an orphanage in Georgia. His real reason was to preach. A person of nearly overpowering charisma, Whitefield also intuited something about the changing circumstances of his day. Whitefield's dramatic appeal to individuals represented a Christian adaptation of the old gospel to the kind of free market that was speedily developing in trade and ideas. It was to the individual (not as positioned in a traditional hierarchy, not as bound by family constraints, not as member of a local congregation) that Whitefield made his appeal. Whitefield preached more than fifteen thousand sermons in his thirty-five-year career as an itinerant, but none were more effective than in 1740. On a New England preaching circuit in the fall of that year, when he was heard by Nathan Cole and his wife, Whitefield addressed crowds of up to eight thousand people nearly every day for over a month. That tour may have been the most sensational event in the history of American religion.

In his wake Whitefield left thousands asking "What must I do to be saved?" He also left some of the colonies' leaders wondering what such religious "enthusiasm" would do to the social fabric, and not a few ministers dismayed about this radical new approach. The attacks that eventually rose against Whitefield and his message led to lingering disputes. But they also prompted careful, discriminating defenses of awakened piety from Jonathan Edwards. Edwards' defense of the Awakening's revivalistic Calvinism became a major component of the theological work that sets him apart as America's most powerful Christian theologian.

Forceful Changes

Revivals like those promoted by Whitefield and defended by Edwards soon spread throughout the colonies. Some, like awakenings under Henry Alline in the Canadian Maritimes, rejected the

Calvinism that had undergirded Whitefield's message. Others, like those encouraged by Isaac Backus in New England and Shubal Stearns in North Carolina, were led by Baptists, a group that grew in great numbers as a result of the Awakening. Still other currents of renewal helped prepare the way for the later expansion of the Methodists.

The colonial Awakening stamped American Protestantism with a revivalistic character that it has never lost. Although its leading spirits (Frelinghuysen, the Tennents, Whitefield, and Edwards) were Calvinist members of state churches, its primary institutions legacy was among Baptists and Methodists who rejected Calvinism, the establishment of religion, or both. Historians ponder deeply the connection between the revivalists' willingness to break with religious tradition and the eagerness of Americans only a few decades later to throw off the hereditary rule of England. Christians will be impressed by that possibility, but even more by the renewal of faith that was the revival's gift to humble hearers like Nathan Cole.

[Noll, M. A. (1990). The Great Awakening Peaks (1740). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*.]

EVENING PRAYER

Compose

Gather yourself from the busy-ness of the day.

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

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

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

Consider

Numbers 23:27-24:25; 2 Timothy 4:1-22

- How have these words revealed God to you?
- Let these words affirm or re-orient what you believe is true and right
- Let these words inform how you review your actions and choices today

Connect

Pray through what God has revealed – thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, etc.

A PRAYER

Lord,
your Spirit sends apostles
to all points of the compass,
and you draw people of all races and nations
into one family in your Church.
Broaden our horizons to learn from one another,
expand our generosity to support one another,
increase our vision to pray for one another,
that united as joint heirs of your grace
the whole earth may resound
with your praise and glory,
through Jesus Christ,
who is our true peace. Amen.

[Black, I. (2011). *Prayers for All Occasions* (p. 49). London: SPCK.]

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Jeremiah 29:11-13

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the LORD, plans for welfare and
not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²
Then you will call upon me and come and
pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will
seek me and find me, when you seek me
with all your heart.