



AWAKENING

right here Jesus right now Jesus

APRIL 28 - MAY 27

Awakening: A Daily Prayer Guide

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Sanctuary's Purpose:

We exist to glorify God by building an authentic body of Christ followers who are faithfully proclaiming the Gospel and being transformed by its power to live and love like Jesus.

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Awakening
A Daily Prayer Guide



Greetings!

I'm so expectant for this next season in the life of our church. Never in the history of our Faith Family have we had such a call to prayer. Never have we needed prayer more than now, and never have the members of our Body experienced the expectancy and dependence upon the way and the will of God as we are today.

For some of you, this may be the first time you will participate in an extended season of prayer and fasting. Your willingness to participate in this journey is part of awakening.

A few folks have asked what we are praying for and why fasting is included in this season of prayer. We are praying for awakening. We are praying a single prayer: *God, begin a great awakening, first in us, then in our church, and then in our neighborhood.* We are praying to see and experience the things that only God can do. We are praying for the effects of grace, for a move of God that is so vast and glorious and captivating that dry bones might be raised to life. "Son of man, can these bones live?"

The ordinary people of Scripture knew nothing of casual prayer. As our Faith Family prays together, we are including the element of fasting because fasting was very much a part of the prayer life of Jesus and His disciples. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He didn't say, "*If you fast;*" rather, Jesus said, "*When you fast.*"

We are fasting and praying with a sense of urgency and audacity, with an attitude of brokenness and desperation. We are travailing in prayer. We are inviting you to pray in a manner that can only be described as both daring and agonizing...as if the Holy Spirit Himself were groaning through us.

In order to help us pray together in unity, we're providing you with this daily prayer guide. You will notice a few simple elements included to

to guide your daily prayer time.

1. A short passage of Scripture
2. A brief devotional thought
3. Personal prayer prompts to help you connect with God
4. Prayer for each person on the unique list of names you received in this packet.

Let me encourage you to use this prayer guide as you begin each day during our fast. It will serve as a guide, but recognize that it is only that: a guide. By no means is it prescriptive of how, what, or why you're to pray, nor is it meant to limit your time in prayer this month. Instead, this is a church-wide handbook to keep us in step with the rest of our Body and to allow us to start each day in a conversation with God for awakening.

As we begin this journey, pray this short prayer with me:

*Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters who are beginning this fresh season of faith with me. We acknowledge at the beginning of this month that you alone are the One we seek. God, you alone are the One who can change lives. Change my life, Father. Please touch us anew with your love, guide us with your grace, fill us with your Spirit, and continue to transform us into the image and character of your Son. We love you, God, and we come to you with great anticipation. Jesus, awaken our Faith Family and our neighborhood to your love and power. And may it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus. In your Name we pray.
Amen.*

Expectant!
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AWAKENING

Fast & Pray

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16–18

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus characterizes the kind of people that live in His kingdom. People in His kingdom are people who forgive, care, serve, love, and pray. In this section of His sermon, Jesus first teaches His disciples how to pray, specifically speaking to the issue of fasting. Fasting was not a new command. God’s people regularly practiced fasting. Here, Jesus speaks to the heart of fasting and to its place in the Christian life.

Jesus fasted. He followed the example of many people in Scripture. Moses fasted for forty days, as did Elijah. According to Scripture, Daniel, Isaiah, Hannah, Queen Esther, Ezra, John the Baptist, and Paul, among others, all fasted.

Jesus fasted, and He assumed that His followers would fast, too. He begins this passage with, “When you fast...”

Fasting is typically associated with a season of not eating for the purpose of focusing our undivided time and attention on God.

But fasting is not just about food. Fasting is about abstaining from something in your life in order to fully focus on God. Fasting is detaching yourself from the world and focusing yourself on God.

One of the greatest benefits of fasting is that it reveals your own sinfulness. As you deny your body nourishment or enjoyment, it begins to respond. Fasting can actually show us just how much our sinful appetites crave to be gratified.

Ultimately, we don't fast to perfect a religious practice or to get God's attention. Instead, we fast to become a different kind of person. Dallas Willard, writing about the example of Jesus, says: "He does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him."

N. J. Vijayalakshmi discusses the changes God can accomplish through our fasting:

"There is so much emphasis on fasting for personal benefit—for the endowment of power, for spiritual gifts, for physical healing, for specific answers to prayer—that the most important aspect can be neglected. Fasting is unto-God. God is not merely concerned with what we do, but why we do it. Fasting is to honour and glorify God, and to accomplish his sovereign will."

In this next thirty days, you are invited to fast. We suggest fasting one meal a day for the purpose of turning your full attention to God. You fast however God leads. It may be fasting from food, or from social media, or from television, or a hobby. Deeper still, you may be called to fast from control, fast from using people to accomplish gain, fast from passivity, fast from managing outcomes, fast from hurry, fast from worry, fast from being concerned about how others view you and

your family, or fast from fear.

As you fast, spend time praying for awakening: your own awakening, the awakening of our Faith Family, the awakening of our neighborhood, and the awakening of the people for whom God has chosen for you to pray during this season.

Spend a few moments reading and reflecting on Isaiah 58. Praise God for His love.

Let's pray.



Sunday, April 28

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel 37:1-3

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
Ephesians 5:14

The prophecy of Ezekiel and the words of Paul have a singular call: awakening for the Church. Before we begin to pray for the neighborhood to awaken, the church must arise from her slumber.

J. D. Walt writes:

For awakening to come to the nations, a different kind of revival must come to the church.

It will not be driven by our hand-wringing angst about the insurmountable challenges around us. We are talking about something beyond what present generations have known; not a mere resurgence of our resolve or even our commitment. Neither are we talking about a mere recovery of some particular kind of charismatic experience or spiritual phenomenon. And for God's sake, we are not talking about a

revitalization of our best-laid plans to grow the church—driven by our visionary leadership, strategic thinking, and enterprising programs—no matter how prayerfully conceived they may be.

We are talking about something far more primitive, a renewal of the original and eternal source of life at the core of our beings. We are talking about a profound renewal of the very life of God in the souls of men and women.¹

Do you think these dry bones can live?

We can go no further until we wrestle this question down. Can God do it? Will God do it? We believe He *is* doing it, and we believe He longs do it through us.

In the story of Queen Esther, an insidious plan is developed by the enemy of the Hebrew people, a man named Haman. Haman is convinced there should be an ethnic cleansing of all the Jews. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, hears of this plot and believes Esther may be in a position to save the Jews. Listen to what Mordecai says to Esther:

“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” Esther 4:13–14

Mordecai tells Esther she doesn't have to save the Jews if she doesn't want to. He tells her that if she is not up for being part of the answer, it's cool. He says, “Deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish.”

¹ J.D. Walt, “The Big Questions and the Bigger Answer” (www.Seedbed.com, January 13, 2018), <https://www.seedbed.com/the-big-question-and-the-bigger-answer/>

We fully believe that salvation will come to this neighborhood. God loves His people, and He will make a way. Should we choose not to act, He'll find someone else to do bring His message. But if that's the case, we will totally miss it.

Check out how Esther responds. She calls for a fast.

"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16

You probably know the rest of the story; if not, read the rest of the book of Esther. God prevails. Because God always prevails.

We believe this month-long journey is going to be marked by spiritual awakening. And you get to be a part of it.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, please awaken me from my sleep.
- God, please awaken Sanctuary for the purposes of your prevailing love.
- God, please awaken West Cobb and Paulding County, and bring true revival.
- God, please begin to awaken each person and family on my list to your unending love for them.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Monday, April 29

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you... Galatians 4:19

Paul is writing to a people he loves. They are likely in a little house church, following the model of the first church in Acts 2. Yet Paul wants more for them than to simply be a church. He wants Christ to be formed in them.

This is no casual yearning. It's not a quick prayer at dawn; it's not just listening to a good sermon in the morning. Paul uses the language that only a mother can truly understand. Paul longs so much for the transformation of the church that he is "again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you."

Paul is traveling in prayer. Childbirth in ancient days was not comfortable. And for Paul, it isn't just a one-time thing; it's not just a one-time prayer. No, he says he is "again in the pains of childbirth."

David Platt says:

"When God's people begin to call out for Him, He will often wait to see if they really want what they are asking for. The greatest hindrance to the spread of the gospel is not the self-indulgent immorality of our culture, but the self-sufficient mentality of the church. Only God is able to do the work of God.

Only God is able to do the work of God.

“Why is it that you and I spend hours every week in the church, devoted to the ministry of the Word, while we spend minutes every week in the ministry devoted to prayer?

“God, in His providence, has chosen to make prayer a powerful means by which we interact with Him and effectively shape the course of history. Do not underestimate the role of desperate (travailing) prayer. Plead for God’s mercy among sinners. Plead for God’s glory on earth. Keep on pleading until the day when Scripture promises, ‘We shall see His face.’”²

Let’s pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, do whatever it takes for Christ to be formed in me.
- God, do whatever it takes for Christ to be formed in our Faith Family.
- God, do whatever it takes for Christ to be formed in our neighborhood.
- God, for these beloved on my list, please do what it takes for Christ to be formed in them.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

² David Platt, quoted from his *Secret Church* teaching.



Tuesday, April 30

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Revelation 8:1–5

Something happens when God's people pray. Something happens that wouldn't happen if we didn't pray. When John the Revelator is transported to heaven, he is stunned by what he witnesses. There, together on the altar, are heavenly incense and the prayers of all God's people. Notice this: "The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand."

Our prayers over these thirty days matter. They rise to heaven, where they are mixed with a heavenly aroma and presented to God at the altar before His throne. Your prayers are interlaced with the fragrance of God; they are mixed with the fire from the altar and then thrown down to earth. The spiritual nature of our prayers are brought before

the throne of God, mixed into the will of God, and then hurled back to to the earth. Your prayers matter. They make a difference in the heavenly realm and then work themselves out in our material world.

Annie Dillard puts it this way:

Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute? ...

Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.³

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, help me see that my prayers matter to you.
- God, I pray for your spiritual presence to be manifest in our church.
- God, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- God, for these beloved, may they, too, experience the beauty of partnering with you in accomplishing your heavenly mission on earth.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

³ Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (Harper & Row; 1st editions, 1982), 52-53



Wednesday, May 1

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. Psalm 126

The Israelites were in exile. There was no light; there was no life. There was no hope. Yet there was a faint whisper of old. There, just over the margins, was a belief that maybe, just maybe, God would come through.

And He did. The captives were released. Life was breathed into their bodies, and they headed home. One commentator said, "The joy was too great for men to take it all in. None could well believe that he had heard aright, and they looked on one another in wonder, like the empty show of a dream." Could it be? Could it be?

Yes! Yes! It is true. The hope of the gospel is now. Its livable reality is available to us in the present moment. It is freedom!

There are so many around us who live in exile. They are bound up in the cares of this world, in self-sufficiency, in performance, in self-protection. They've stopped dreaming, stopped hoping, stopped living.

It is for these we pray. It's for these we "go out weeping." It's for these we believe in the hope of the gospel until they are able to believe and receive it for themselves. It's for these we travail.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, I thank you for those who sowed with tears for my salvation.
- God, I thank you for the privilege to sow alongside people in our Faith Family.
- God, I thank you for my neighbors, co-workers, and teammates. You've placed me here among them. I praise you for where I am—where you have placed me.
- God, for these beloved, I pray that they may return to you, singing the redemption song.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Thursday, May 2

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Today is the National Day of Prayer. Its roots go back to 1774, when the Continental Congress designated a time for prayer as our founders sought to establish a new nation. A congressional bill establishing the National Day of Prayer was signed into law in 1952 by President Harry S. Truman. This law set aside one day each year, other than Sunday, for our nation to pray. Dr. Ronnie Floyd, President of the National Day of Prayer, says, "There is no great movement of God that has ever occurred that does not begin with the extraordinary prayer of God's people."

The theme for this year's National Day of Prayer is "Love One Another," based upon the words of Jesus in John 13:34: "Love one another, just as I have loved you." This is our call today. Our call is to love. Our call is to offer prayers that are motivated, animated, and empowered by love.

One of the ways our staff was awakened this year was to the power of love. So many of us in our Faith Family struggle in believing that we are the beloved. Many of us believe in the power of God's love for someone else; we believe it for our kids, we believe it for our

grandparents, we believe it for the people who sit next to us in church. But believing that we ourselves are the beloved is often incredibly difficult. Until we can grasp the truth that Jesus loves us just as we are, right where we are, we will just go through the spiritual motions and live in a spiritual cul-de-sac.

Let's pray today that we will know the love of God, live in the love of God, and live out the love of God.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the depths of your love.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to believe in and receive the goodness of your love.
- God, help me to truly love my neighbor.
- God, for these beloved, I pray for your overwhelming love to rest on them, that they may rest in you.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Friday, May 3

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Isaiah 60:1–2

God has made a covenant with His bride: He has come, and He will come again. Isaiah delivers hope and a promise to a dying nation. Darkness covers the earth; darkness covers a people; darkness covers hearts. Darkness still covers.

Darkness tends to make its way into our thinking and believing. It makes its way into our homes and neighborhoods and even our church. Darkness has settled into our preschools and classrooms; it has invaded baseball fields and offices and cities and states. It has spread over our nation. Darkness is here. Do you sense it?

Church, we come together to declare that in the midst of darkness, "The Lord rises upon you." There is hope that nations will come into His light. Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." He doesn't say, "One day you will be the light." He doesn't say, "When you get it all together, then you will be the light." No, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." Right here and right now. Paul says, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

Light exposes the darkness. Light overwhelms darkness. Darkness cannot stand in the Light of Truth. The darkness will shudder as His light is declared over all the land.

Let us continue to join together in the recognition of His light in us, His light with us, His light around us. Let's declare that the darkness will not win. Let's join together with the heavenly realms. Let's bring ourselves, each other, our neighbors, and the nations into His light, believing deeper still that Christ does indeed shine. Let us be awakened. As Helen Keller said, "Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light."

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the hidden spaces in my own heart that are hindering your light.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to a deeper belief that your light is shining forth in and through us.
- God, awaken the neighborhood. Shine your light over all darkness, causing darkness to shudder and flee.
- God, for these beloved, I pray for your light to shine upon each of them. I bring them to the brightness of your dawn.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Saturday, May 4

"The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people. Just as you, Judah and Israel, have been a curse among the nations, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong." Zechariah 8:12–13

For more than fifteen years, God and His prophets have been urging His people to continue working on the temple. Again, God encourages His people by reminding them of His vision for the future and calling them to continue their work as they focus on the promise yet to come. His people will grow tired; they will lose sight of the vision, and their hope will fade.

Remember: as long as you have breath, you have purpose. You have hope. Therefore, believe and sow. Sow to your spirit through prayer. Sow into the land through intercession. Sow deeper still into the Kingdom by lifting up your praises and petitions to our God, who has promised His blessing. Be steadfast and determined not to give up or slow down in your prayers.

Recognize, too, that His blessing is already here. We are His bride, and we are blessed! Be ready to receive and declare His blessings as you live expectantly in His presence and His promise.

George Müller once stated:

It is not enough for the believer to begin to pray, nor to pray correctly; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray. We must patiently, believingly continue in prayer until we obtain an answer. Further, we have not only to continue in prayer until the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing. Those who are disciples of the Lord Jesus should labor with all their might in the work of God as if everything depended upon their own endeavors. Yet, having done so, they should not in the least trust in their labor and efforts, nor in the means that they use for the spread of the truth, but in God alone; and they should with all earnestness seek the blessing of God in persevering, patient, and believing prayer. Here is the great secret of success, my Christian reader. Work with all your might, but never trust in your work. Pray with all your might for the blessing in God, but work at the same time with all diligence, with all patience, with all perseverance. Pray, then, and work. Work and pray. And still again pray, and then work. And so on, all the days of your life. The result will surely be abundant blessing. Whether you see much fruit or little fruit, such kind of service will be blessed.⁴

⁴ George Müller, "Men Ought Always to Pray" (www.georgemuller.org, November 8, 2015), <https://www.georgemuller.org/quotes/category/persistence>

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to a deeper belief that the blessings around me are from you alone; none of them are accomplished on my own.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to believe you have blessed us, to receive your blessings today, and to trust that you will bless us in the future.
- God, awaken us to see the blessing of our neighbors, colleagues, and friends. Bless all who surround us, and God, bless them through us.
- God, for these beloved, I ask for your blessings to be poured out over them. May they be awakened to realize that you are the one who gives all the blessings of life.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Sunday, May 5

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:12–18

The veil has been removed. It's time for us to come out of the shadows and into the fullness of God's grace. We can come to our Father with freedom, for His Spirit lives in us. His freedom allows us to contemplate His glory as we are being transformed more and more into His image.

Paul says, "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold." We have the hope of Paul's own testimony, as well as the words of the prophets before him. God delivers His word to Ezekiel, promising to remove His people's hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). And through Jeremiah, God promises to make a new covenant with His people, saying, "I will be their God and they will be

my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

When Paul speaks of boldness, he speaks from a place of belief and hope in the One he knows and trusts. If we sense that we are hindered in our witness or not courageous in our righteousness, we may be living with false hope. The time for placing our hope in the failing things of this world has passed. As we turn our hope more and more to Christ alone, His Spirit—the Spirit who provides freedom and boldness—will birth new hope in us as He lives through us. Let's boldly join in prayer, believing that our Deliverer has been working in us and will continue His work until the day we come to unity and maturity in faith. As God's children, we live in freedom and in hope for the hurting to heal, the broken to be restored, and the lost to be found.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the hope of Christ alone.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to believe and receive you as our only hope.
- God, awaken me to hope, both for my neighbor and with my neighbor.
- God, for these beloved, I pray for your Spirit to fall on them, bringing freedom to their lives and hope to their days.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Monday, May 6

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:17–18

Paul has just charged the believers at Ephesus to “put on the full armor of God,” which we are privileged to wear as followers of Christ. He continues here with instruction to take up “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” and pray.

When we reach for God’s Word, it is not dead weight. It’s full of prayers and petitions from the prophets and saints who came before us. John Piper notes, “The weapon of the word of God serves the wielding power of prayer by giving words to prayer. Prayer, when it is full of power, is full of the word of God.”⁵

In keeping with Paul’s instruction, let us keep praying. Paul encourages God’s people to live lives of prayer, to pray throughout their day-to-day lives—circumstance by circumstance, hour by hour, moment by moment. When our lives are best ordered around the desires of God and His teachings, our very life becomes prayer. It’s like breathing.

⁵ John Piper, “The Weapon Serves the Wielding Power” (www.desiringgod.org, January 6, 1985), <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-weapon-serves-the-wielding-power>

Paul calls us to a deeper vision for our lives. He calls us to lives of prayer in all situations, for all needs, at all times, and for all God's people. This call is for the bride of Christ today. Like those in Ephesus, we must pray in the Spirit, staying alert both to the situations around us and our own thinking within us. On every occasion, in every state of affairs, we are called to pray. There is no circumstance in your day that is too big or too little to bring to your Father, for you are His beloved child. Every occasion is either ordered or permitted by Him, and every situation will ultimately be used for our good and His glory.

Oswald Chambers wrote, "If God sees that my spiritual life will be furthered by giving the things for which I ask, then He will give them, but that is not the end of prayer. The end of prayer is that I come to know God Himself."⁶

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the power of your Word, and quicken my Spirit to pray...and then, to pray some more.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to alert minds, continual prayer, and the power of your Word.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the power of prayer, the power of your Word, and life that is at rest when we live in your will.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to lives of prayer that guide them on this earth.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

⁶ Oswald Chambers, on Prayer and Purpose (www.gracequotes.org, Prayer-Purpose), <https://gracequotes.org/topic/prayer-6-purpose/>



Tuesday, May 7

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!" The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. Psalm 116:1–7

Who keeps talking when not being heard? Who continues to speak to deaf ears? We certainly would not continue to call if no one answered. We might call for a while, but if the constant reply is silence, or if there is a repeated "no" in response, we'd eventually stop speaking..

That is not our God. That is not the way He sees you, hears you, or loves you. Our God is the One who always hears, always listens, always pursues, always invites and engages. He is the One on whom we can continue to call. He doesn't tire of hearing our cries. In Psalm 116, David expresses deep gratitude in the midst of his anguish for the never-ceasing, ever-listening ear of our God.

God has turned His face toward His people. He has turned His heart toward us. He has turned His ear toward you. He waits, He listens, and He always answers. He hears and receives our praise, our petitions, our pleas, our despair, and our celebration, and He joins us in the midst of them.

The invitation to come to our God is here. He is here now. He will continue to be here. He bends down to listen to you. Who doesn't desire such compassion, such attention, such pursuit? David believes that God hears and that He answers, so he calls out time and time again when he is hurting, when he's hiding, when he's fleeing. In the midst of danger and despair, David continually cries out to God through songs, prayers, and poetry, and many of these cries show up in the Psalms. David knows that God hears him and cares.

The more we cry out to God for the deliverance of our souls and the souls around us, the more our belief and trust in Him deepens. It's by faith that we pray. And by faith, we have the assurance that He hears and answers us. By faith, we believe that God is at work, and our prayers of pain are turned to prayers of praise.

*Now I can say to myself and to all,
"Relax and rest, be confident and serene,
for the Lord rewards fully those who simply trust in him."
Psalm 116:7 (TPT)*

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to believe that you hear and answer me.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to pray prayers of faith and respond with praise.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the reality of your listening ear and the power of giving praise to your name.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to cry out to you. Bend your ear to them; bring them to a place of rest. Be good to them, Lord.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Wednesday, May 8

Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Exodus 33:8–11

One of the most consistent patterns of Moses' life is the regularity with which he prayed for people. He continually sought God's guidance and direction, both for himself and for the Israelite community, regularly interceding on behalf of the people of God. In the text, we witness Moses carrying his people into the presence of God to cry out on their behalf and to listen to God's direction for their next steps, both personally and communally. Moses met with God face to face.

Intercession in its truest form is being in God's presence on behalf of others. It's being willing to enter into the suffering of others and to bring that suffering to God our Healer.

Many times, we are tempted to fix the great unfixables. We are tempted to use our wit or wisdom to soothe suffering. Both may offer some relief, but neither will nurture healing. Only God can do that.

Today, let's enter into God's presence on behalf of those who are suffering. Our prayer prompts will be different today. They may help give shape to your time of intercession. Feel free to use these prompts, or to, as always, pray as the Lord leads you.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence those who suffer pain and ill health... (silence to allow the names and faces of those you know to come to mind, and then pray).
...May they know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence those who suffer in mind and spirit...(silence).
...May they know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence the suffering people of our world, and the places where people are experiencing hurt and division — including places of hurt and division in my own life... (silence).
...May we know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence those experiencing grief and loss...(silence).
...May they know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence those who need wisdom for their next steps... (silence).
...May we know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence those people and situations that seem broken beyond repair...(silence).
...May we/they know the deep peace of Christ.*

*Loving God, I hold in your healing presence and peace those whose needs are not known to me but are known by you, and those for whom I have been asked to pray...(silence). I name in my heart all those who are close to me...(silence).
...May they know the deep peace of Christ.*

Glory to God, from whom all love flows, glory to Jesus, who showed his love through suffering, and glory to the Holy Spirit, who brings light to the darkest places.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Adapted from Iona Abbey Worship Book by Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (IVP Books; First Edition, July 6, 2008) 152–153



Thursday, May 9

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

Exodus 15:22–25

In a quick review of the life and leadership of Moses, we find him regularly crying out to God on behalf of others (Exodus 17:4, 8:12, 15:25, 32:11; Numbers 11:2, 12:13, 14:17–19, 16:42–50, 21:6–9). Each time Moses cries out, God responds. Each time. And each time the prayers of Moses impact the outcomes.

Our prayers do not dictate outcomes. We don't have that kind of power. Our willingness to courageously and lovingly pray for ourselves and for others does have an effect on the outcome of the lives we live and the way we love. Your prayers matter.

Moses "cries out to the Lord." Let's join him.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the recognition that nothing else—no one else—can satisfy. Only you.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to realize that our deepest thirst will not be satisfied in a new group, a new series, a new program, or a new building. Only you. Only you.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the emptiness of self-sufficiency. Only you.
- God, for these beloved, I pray for you to meet their deepest longings. Only you.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Friday, May 10

"Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 'The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.' In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." Numbers 14:17–19

*"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
Luke 23:34*

Our great need is to be awakened to the great love of God. It's to understand the depths to which God goes to redeem His people, to heal His people, to know His people, to forgive His people, to love His people.

Sin separates. Sin separates us from God; sin separates husband from wife; sin separates mom from daughter; sin separates us from our truest self. Hell is the ultimate separation.

Forgiveness frees us from the bondage of sin and immediately transports us to the throne room of the Holy One.

Moses in the desert and Jesus on the cross both pray for forgiveness of others; in particular, they pray for people who have yet to seek or even recognize their need for forgiveness. Certainly, there are other examples in Scripture where this same prayer is prayed, a prayer of forgiveness for someone who hasn't even articulated his need for it.

Eugene Peterson encourages us this way:

We live in a world seething in sin and awash in violence. We daily read and see the news of it in the media. We also come up against it, even though unreported in the police logs, many times a day in our homes and workplaces and neighborhoods. What I am contending for as a consequence of praying Jesus' prayer from the cross is that forgiveness should become our first response to every person who demeans and hurts and takes our life. There certainly will be matters of justice for society to deal with along the way, and it may be important for us to participate in them. There are judges and prosecuting attorneys, police and juries, and there are many of us who pursue and uphold the cause of justice who are counted among them. But who else is there to say "Father, forgive them" but Christians who know how to pray that prayer with Jesus? However important justice is — and it is important — forgiveness is more important. The Christian at prayer, even as Jesus at prayer, is not first of all an impersonal agent of justice but a personal conveyor of forgiveness and a witness to the resurrection.

Such forgiveness is not soft sentimentality. It is hard-edged gospel. Such forgiveness is not a moral shrug of the shoulders. It is a white-hot flame of resurrection love forged in the furnace of the cross.⁸

⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 247–248

Today, let's pray for forgiveness and for the "white-hot flame of resurrection love." Today we will join the prayers of Moses and Jesus in asking God to forgive the sin of others, beginning with us.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, forgive me, for my sins are many. Awaken me to the freedom of forgiveness.
- God, forgive us for our religion, our judgment, our exclusiveness. Awaken us to grace.
- God awaken our neighborhood to see the power of forgiveness over justice.
- God, for these beloved, I pray for their forgiveness, "for they know not what they do."

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Saturday, May 11

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14–16

You have been invited into one of the highest of callings. You have been invited to speak to God on your own behalf and on behalf of others—specifically the ten names before you. You’ve been invited to pray for them to receive mercy and find grace to help them in their time of need.

What could be more daring? What could be more beautiful? What could be more holy?

It may be that by this time in our thirty days of fasting and praying, you may be tempted not to believe in the power of what you are doing. You may be sensing doubt, even failure. Don’t be afraid. Don’t back down.

It can happen. We can get distracted. We can believe the lies. We can just start checking religious boxes; that’s a whole lot easier than bringing our full selves to God, just as we are, right where we are.

In his book *Thoughts in Solitude*, Thomas Merton talks about the fear in moments like this.

Cowardice keeps us “double minded”—hesitating between the world and God. In this hesitation, there is no true faith—faith remains an opinion. We are never certain, because we never quite give in to the authority of an invisible God. This hesitation is the death of hope. We never let go of those visible supports which, we well know, must one day surely fail us. And this hesitation makes true prayer impossible—it never quite dares to ask for anything, or if it asks, it is so uncertain of being heard that in the very act of asking, it surreptitiously seeks by human prudence to construct a make-shift answer.⁹

God has made a way for you to come before the throne courageously and confidently. His love is greater than our weakness, our failures, and our sin. Let’s again hold firmly to who He is in His strength and His love. Let’s approach Him that we may receive mercy and find grace for today.

Let’s pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, remind me that I am not defined by my failures and sin. My identity is in you.
- God, give us courage as a Faith Family to recognize our calling to engage in the needs of others.
- God, strengthen me to obey your call to “love thy neighbor” and to truly “love thy neighborhood.”
- God, for these beloved, I pray they might receive mercy and find grace in their time of need.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

⁹ Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 24



Sunday, May 12

In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life..." 1 Samuel 1:10–11

*"...I am a woman who is deeply troubled...I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."
1 Samuel 1:15–16*

In ancient cultures, a man or woman who was "barren" represented a broken world. In our recent Lenten devotional, we read these verses and explored the issue of barrenness.

The pressures to produce an heir and insure an inheritance in Israel were so tremendous that "barrenness" might describe not only the physical but also the spiritual and social condition of someone's affliction. After years of this, Hannah recognized that her grief had become sin and her mourning had become an "affliction" (1 Samuel 1:11), so at Shiloh she sacrificed that which enslaved her to the Lord. Upon repenting, she vowed that if she were ever to have a child, she would dedicate him to the Lord — rather than using her child

as proof of her worth to those who had been judging her. She soon conceived and later returned with her son, whom she gave as an apprentice to Eli the priest. This boy was Samuel, the first of the great Old Testament prophets.¹⁰

This reality is even more poignant today, Mother's Day. While it is a day of immense blessing, it is also a day of true pain for many.

Hannah travails in prayer. She prays from the truest depths of her being, "I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Hannah is praying, in one sense, for her life, as well as for the birth of a new life.

It's important to hold two things before us. The first is that Hannah recognized that her grief had become sin and her mourning had become an "affliction." There are times when we want something so desperately that our motives change, our perceptions change, our desires change to something less than what God desires.

The second is that God answers Hannah. In her life, God answers with new life. In regard to prayer, this is not prescriptive; it's descriptive. God does not always give us what we ask for, even when we travail in prayer. He will always answer us, always—but He may ask us to trust Him when He doesn't do what we want Him to do.

Today, we join in this posture of prayer. We pray for life. We pray for our own lives and for new life to come to our neighborhood. We pray for awakening.

¹⁰ Redeemer Church, "Lent Day 7: The Prayer" (www.redeemer.com), https://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources_by_topic/lenten_devotionals/lent_day_7_the_prayer

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, help me to sacrifice what enslaves me. Awaken me to places where my mourning has become an affliction.
- God, help us to receive our worth and value and purpose as a church, not in what we do or don't do, but in you and you alone.
- God, in my neighborhood which, at times, idolizes family, awaken us to your Father's Heart.
- God, for these beloved, I pray they may have life, and life abundantly.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

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Monday, May 13

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 13:8–14

We have a gentle and compassionate Creator, a good and perfect Master who has summed up all our obligations with one word: "love." Love is the one thing above all other things. We are privileged to participate in the giving and receiving of His love, to embrace His love and then to express His love to others. It's in love that we are made. Love holds us, molds us, carries us, intercedes for us, forgives us. Love is present with us always.

In his book *Surrender to Love*, David Benner quotes Henri Nouwen:

Nouwen notes that “becoming like the heavenly Father is not just one important aspect of Jesus’ teaching, it is the very heart of his message.”

What God wants is daughters and sons who show a family resemblance. He wants us to be known as great lovers because love is his way.¹¹

As hard as we strive and as much as we try, the reality is that the purest, holiest expression of love cannot be forced or manufactured. It must be believed and received. The disciples asked Jesus:

“What must we do to do the works God requires?”

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” (John 6:28–29)

Let us be a body that believes, receives, and responds in love...all because of love.

As we become surrendered to the truth of love, God lives His life of love through us. The apostle calls attention to the present time—“the hour has come.” It is now. There is no time to waste, for the day is near. We must live in His love today.

What could awaken us more than love? Our neighborhood, our nation—in fact, the entire world is in desperate need for awakening. We need to be awakened to an awareness of sin, of complacency, of spiritual deadness and dryness, and we need to be awakened to a life of love.

¹¹ David Benner, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality* (The Spiritual Journey) (IVP Books; Expanded edition, 2015), 85

When love rules your thinking, it will rule your being. As followers of Christ, we have the privilege and the command to love; we live this out by taking our eyes off of our sinful nature and clothing ourselves with the righteousness of Christ. Our homes, our work, our neighbors and community, and our nation are at stake. The world needs us to awaken to the truth of love, living in and through the Body of Christ.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to receive the fullness of your love, for I know that nothing else will satisfy me.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to fall out of "doing" and into loving from the deepest space of surrender.
- God, awaken my neighbor to your divine love.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to believe that you are love, that they are made by and for love; then, Lord, help them receive your love.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

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Tuesday, May 14

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. 1 John 5:13–15

Having been with God, the apostle writes with authority and certainty. Here, Paul is encouraging future generations in the faith. He's reminding believers that God wants us to come to Him with boldness, knowing—not hoping, but knowing—with confidence, that He hears us and will answer “yes” as we pray in line with His will. We can come to our Father with the confidence that He already knows what we need and what we want. We can be confident that He already sees and knows the desires of our heart. We can trust Him with our whole hearts, believing He is for us.

The prayers of both the Old Testament prophets and the apostles were for a rescue, for the interruption of divine love, for mercy—all for the sake of God and His Kingdom.

We do not pray to inform God. We pray to bring our whole lives and the lives of those around us to Him. The more we seek God, the more we see Him, and the more we pray in alignment with His will. And we know the will of God is to believe in His love.

God's will is found most perfectly in His Word. Therefore, let's continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of His Word. The more we know His Word, the more readily we can discern His voice and know His will. Then we can pray with confidence and boldness for His Kingdom to reign on earth, as it does in heaven.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to a new confidence in you, as I trust you more deeply and surrender more freely to your will.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to believe in your will, to grow in your will, and to intercede for others in alignment with your will.
- God, awaken my neighbor to desire nothing more than to know you intimately and seek your will.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to know and trust you more deeply and to pray with confidence for your will to be done.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Wednesday, May 15

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God. Joel 2:12–14

Generation after generation continues to turn back to complacency, to defeated living, to mockery, to darkness. Still, generation after generation, God sends His message of hope for all the earth to hear and believe and receive. Like Judah, we too can quickly turn to idolatry and selfish living. God’s call to Judah was to turn back, to return. Throughout history, this has been the singular message of the prophets: “Turn back. Return to God.”

God is facing us. He has not turned his back on us. He has not lost track of us. He has not forgotten about us. His face is turned toward us. His desire is the fullness of our hearts.

Repentance—“turning back”—is an act of the will. It’s saying, “I’m tired of self-sufficiency, of self-protection, of sin, of shame. I’m done with this. I’m done with me.” We empty ourselves of ourselves before the tender and healing heart of God. In brokenness, we bring our open and vulnerable hearts before God, asking Him to fill our hearts

with His love. Our God of Love wants to fill our hearts, to enable us to take every thought captive to obedience to Him, and to make us whole in every way.

John Eldredge writes:

The heart is central. That I would even need to remind you of this only shows how far we have fallen from the life we were meant to live—or how powerful the spell has been. The subject of the heart is addressed in the Bible more than any other topic—more than “works” or “serve,” more than “believe” or “obey,” more than money and even more than worship. Maybe God knows something we’ve forgotten. But of course—all those other things are matters of the heart.¹²

What do we have to lose? “Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing...”

The prophet Joel continues:

The LORD replied to them:

*“I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil,
enough to satisfy you fully;
never again will I make you
an object of scorn to the nations.”* Joel 2:19

Surely he has done great things!

*Do not be afraid, land of Judah;
be glad and rejoice.*

Surely the LORD has done great things! Joel 2:20–21

¹² John Eldredge, “The Heart is Central” (www.ransomedheart.com, October 21, 2017), <https://www.ransomedheart.com/daily-reading/heart-central>

Do not be afraid, Sanctuary. Do not fear. Remember His lovingkindness and repent; turn back to God and rest in His love. Then rejoice in who He is and in all He's done.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the spaces that call for repentance. Awaken me to trust you with my whole heart—fully, completely, and forever.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to repentance for our sinful ways and lead us to a deeper surrender and trust in your ways.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the truths of your compassion and relentless love.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to a desire to turn toward you. Bless them, Lord, and may they rejoice in the great things you have done.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Thursday, May 16

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:1–7

It can happen quickly and quietly. It's extremely thin, this life; our schedules threaten to rule us, and the frailty of our humanity becomes quickly apparent as we are immersed in everyday living. The Psalms are prayers of beautiful vulnerability, words that we may not often speak. Psalm 80 includes some of those words. Israel is afflicted; a Kingdom is broken, and cries of mercy come from the core of the Psalmist's heart.

Could we be so bold? Could we come to God with such honesty, exposing the spaces we think we keep hidden: the ways we cope, the lies we tell ourselves, the hearts behind the masks? God knows. He knows, and yet He still turns toward His people, shining on us, blessing us.

We don't often wake up desiring the destruction of the day. No one would want such pain and loss of control. But that's what happens over time. Slowly, subtly, one day of selfishness turns into another day, which turns into another, until destruction finally occurs. It's typically then that we cry out like the Psalmist. It's then that we want to be awakened and restored and renewed.

What about now? What about here? What about the honest needs of your heart? What about the places that are slowly being torn apart in our neighborhood, in our homes?

When we look around, we can clearly see our need to come to God in despair, crying for mercy, crying for forgiveness. These thirty days provide the space to do just that as we examine our own lives and the lives of those around us, to turn toward Him and receive His life and His light as He shines His blessing on us. This season gives opens the opportunity to receive His rest, certain that He is good and can be trusted. It gives us the freedom to say, "Yes, Lord. Yes."

And then my soul, awakening with the morn,
Shall be a waking joy, eternally new-born.
—George MacDonald

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to your life-giving power that lives in me.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to your power that turns us back to you.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the belief in your power that saves.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to receive your radiant glory as they turn toward you and see you facing them.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Friday, May 17

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Isaiah 40:1–5

God's people have been exiled. They are in captivity, where they experience endless days of anguish and distress. Yet, even still, even there, God never leaves His people without a hope and a promise. Judah still has many years of trouble ahead of her, but she is not left without hope. In the midst of such a season, comfort is proclaimed. As *The Life Application Study Bible* notes, "The seeds of comfort may take root in the soil of adversity." Our gentle and compassionate God speaks comfort.

As the prophet speaks of the deliverance of the Jews, he also points to a more glorious deliverance. He prophesies the coming of our Deliverer, Christ our Savior.

We too are called to prophesy, to clear the way, to blaze a trail of holiness in preparation for those who will come behind us in repentance and faith. Clearing the way and blazing a trail will require courage and dependency. It will require a mustard-seed faith that will move mountains. There are obstacles before us; there are challenges and suffering. Let's not turn our eyes away in defeat. Let's see what lies before us and lift it up before our God of All Comfort.

*Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in. Psalm 24:7*

We join together with all of heaven as we pray during this thirty-day period. As a church, let us come together with the certainty that our King has come and is coming again; let's pray fervently and with expectancy to see and hear and experience God's comfort today.

Isaiah prepared the way for Israel. John prepared the way for Jesus. Today, through our prayers and the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives, we prepare the way for salvation, for transformation, for true comfort to be experienced. We have the holy privilege of preparing the way by prayer, fasting, and faith that salvation has come. He is here, and He is to come for our homes, our neighbors, and the nations.

*Like a shepherd, he will care for his flock,
gathering the lambs in his arms,
Hugging them as he carries them,
leading the nursing ewes to good pasture.
Isaiah 40:11 (MSG)*

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to receive your comfort in my brokenness. Then, through my brokenness, reveal your glory.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to the high calling of preparing the way so that your land is healed and your glory is revealed.
- God, awaken my neighbor to your comforting hands and your prepared way.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to see your glory that is being revealed to and through them.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Saturday, May 18

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Psalm 139:1–2

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23–24

There is nothing more vulnerable and intimate than prayer. In prayer, we bring our full selves to God. There can be nothing hidden, for “even the darkness will not be dark to you” (Psalm 139:12).

David comes before God and invites God to see him fully. David knows there is no need to pretend or hide or perform. God sees, God knows, and God loves. Before God, in the midst of our belonging and becoming, we are fully known and fully loved all at the same time—just as we are, right where we are.

Oswald Chambers writes:

Knowledge of what sin is is in inverse ratio to its presence; only as sin goes do you realize what it is; when it is present you do not realize what it is because the nature of sin is that it destroys the capacity to know you sin.¹³

¹³ Oswald Chambers, *Biblical Ethics: Ethical Principles for the Christian Life* (Discovery House, 1998)

Those who are maturing in Christ, who are immersed freely in the stream of transformation, desire for God to make His presence known and to make our sin known so it may be confessed, uprooted, and redeemed.

Our prayer today is one of invitation. We're inviting Him to search us and know us, inviting Him to meet us in the places and spaces that cause us to worry or become fixated in anxious thoughts. And we're inviting Him to meet us there, speak to us there, and to lead us from there "in the way everlasting."

Our prayer prompts will again be different today. These prompts may help give shape to the way you invite God to search you, our Faith Family, our neighborhood, and our beloved. Feel free to use these prompts, or as always, to pray as you are led.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

I surrender myself to you.

I surrender my desire for security and survival.

I surrender my desire for approval and affection.

I surrender my desire for power and control.

I surrender my desire to change (any situation, person, event, feeling, or emotion).

I pray not for what I want, but for what you know I need.

I pray for courage to follow you as you lead me in the everlasting way.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Sunday, May 19

*When I heard these things, I sat down and wept.
For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of
heaven. Nehemiah 1:4*

You may know the story of Nehemiah, the governor of the Persian province of Judah. His name means “Yahweh comforts” or “Yahweh has comforted.” Nehemiah hears about the destruction of Jerusalem. He comes back to the city and witnesses its devastation. The walls around the city are in rubble; the temple has been burned, and few Jews remain. Most are still in exile.

Nehemiah weeps for the physical destruction of the city and the spiritual destruction of his exiled people. It’s heartbreaking. He can’t do anything but sit down and weep, literally mourning over what has happened to his people. He mourns and fasts and prays. This is part of his prayer.

*“LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God,
who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and
keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your
eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before
you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I
confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s
family, have committed against you. We have acted very*

wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

“Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’” Nehemiah 1:5–9

You don't have to look far to find hurt and suffering. You don't have to go to downtown Atlanta to find darkness and depravity. It's right here. It's at Harrison High School; it's at Hillgrove High School and Allatoona High School and Mt. Paran High School and even Cornerstone Prep. Hearts are hurting everywhere, especially the hearts of His kids. The word recently used to describe the majority of high school students in Cobb County was “hopeless.” There is a growing sense of despair among our kids. We need an awakening in our schools. Would you pray for our schools? Would you sit down and weep, mourn, fast, and pray for awakening? Would you travail?

Our prayer prompts will once again be different today. Today we'll join Nehemiah in his prayer for his people. We'll personalize his prayer for ourselves, our church, our neighbors, and His beloved for whom you've been interceding, especially those students at Hayes Elementary. Fill in the blanks with specific names, beginning with yours. Feel free to use this Scripture, or as always, pray as you are led.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

"LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with _____, those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer _____ is praying before you day and night for _____, the people of _____. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and our _____, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If _____ is unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if _____ returns to me and obeys my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather _____ from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'"

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Monday, May 20

"You have done nothing but bless." Numbers 23:11

Do you know the story of Balaam? It's probably the funniest story in the Bible. Here is some quick background.

This story takes place as the Hebrew people near the conclusion of a forty-year pilgrimage from a life of cruel slavery in Egypt to a salvation life of freedom in Canaan. They have one final area through which to move before they are home in the Promised Land. They have to go through Moab.

The king of Moab, Balak, hears reports that the Israelites are wiping out their enemies. King Balak realizes he's up against something more powerful than a physical army, so he decides he needs a bigger weapon with which to fight Israel. He needs the help of the gods. He knows he can't personally connect with the gods, so he'll need to find someone who will pray on his behalf. He sends out word to his folks that he needs a skilled pray-er.

One name comes back: Balaam. King, if you need someone to talk to heaven, Balaam is your man.

The story takes off here. Balaam decides to meet the king. On his way, Balaam's donkey talks to him. That's hilarious in and of itself, but the story continues. King Balak brings Balaam to a mountain range,

where he is instructed to pray curses over the Hebrew people to bring calamity upon them. Each time Balaam opens his mouth, however, all he can say are words of blessing. This doesn't just happen once. It doesn't just happen twice. It happens three times. The last time this happens, Balaam opens his mouth and utters a prophecy. It's a prophecy that includes the greatest blessing of all.

*"I see him, but not right now,
I perceive him, but not right here;
A star rises from Jacob
A scepter from Israel."* Numbers 24:17 (MSG)

In our town, most people know Christians as judgmental and angry. People know us for what we are against, not what we are for. God is a God of blessing. God's characteristic way is not to be angry, but to bless. When He looks at a man or a woman, He sees His child.

"This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, help me receive your blessing and rest in your good will toward me.
- God, as a blessing is prayed over us every Sunday, may our Faith Family live fully in your peace.
- God, would you help me actively engage in blessing my neighbor, both with words and with action?
- God, for these beloved, I pray that your unfailing love will rest on them today.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Tuesday, May 21

“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 debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:9–13

Of all the things the disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them, they asked Him to teach them to pray. “Lord, teach us to pray.” So Jesus taught His disciples several important truths to help them pray in ways that connect with God.

First, He taught that prayer is relational, not transactional. Prayer is a conversation with our Father who loves us, not simply a tool we use to get things we need from Him.

Second, Jesus taught that the purpose of prayer is the elevation of God’s name, not our comfort or the improvement of our circumstances. It is in prayer that we learn to submit and surrender our will and our way to God’s will and way.

Third, He taught the purpose of prayer is “for up there to come down here.” Prayer is the space God uses to usher in the ways of the heavenly realm so that they might be established on earth.

Jesus has come to resurrect us to life on earth as it was meant to be. He is redeeming us for Garden Life. A life without sin and shame. A life of intimacy, peace, and joy. A life of life!

This is the heart cry of awakening. It's the cry for dead things to come back to full life. It's the cry for resurrection. J. D. Walt says:

Resurrection. It's the most powerful word in the entire Bible... It means to raise the dead from the grave, never to die again. This is the ultimate and fullest and final awakening— the most unbelievable, unfathomable, and, yes, impossible thing in the world.¹⁴

Today, let's pray for "up there to come down here." Let's pray for God's Kingdom to be established here and now. Let's pray for God's will to be accomplished in us and through us. Let's pray for trust in His daily bread. Let's pray for our own forgiveness and our freedom to forgive others. Let's pray for awareness of that sin which so easily entangles. Let's pray for the deliverance of evil. Let's pray it all for our good and for His glory.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, I pray not for what I want, but for what you know I need.
- God, I pray that our Faith Family will fully inhabit the Kingdom life you've invited us to live.
- God, I pray for my neighbors to know the beauty of the heavenly realm as seen in everyday, ordinary acts of grace.
- God, for these beloved, I pray nothing less than resurrection.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

14 J.D. Walt, "On Shifting the Center of Gravity in Your Life" (www.seedbed.com, March 25, 2018), https://www.seedbed.com/page/52/?attachment_id=cthkuvaeciejhf



Wednesday, May 22

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:4–6

The story of the founding of the church in Philippi appears in Acts 16. Philippi was the first town in which Paul preached on the continent now known as Europe. A Gentile businesswoman named Lydia became the first convert to Christianity, after which a Philippian jailer also converted. The church met in Lydia's house. Paul had a deep love and admiration for each person in this church and the ministry that took place there.

Notice what Paul says in Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." This is one of the most comforting truths in the Bible. He will do it. God will do it. You don't have to work harder or strive more or behave better...He will do it. He is doing it. He is doing it in you, and He is doing it through you. He's awakening you more and more to His love.

Paul believes God is growing His people in this little house church. He believes it, and then he prays. These are the next few verses in Philippians 1.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.
Philippians 1:9–11

Paul prays for God’s love to abound in us. His love in us transforms us, changes us, grows us, blesses us, blesses others, and blesses the very heart of God.

He’s doing it. Awakening is here.

Let’s pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, I pray for the faith to trust in your work, not in my own.
- God, I pray that your love in our church would abound in the places where we work, live, and play.
- God, I pray that your fruit in me will be on display to my neighbors and neighborhood as a sign of your prevailing love in my life.
- God, for these beloved, I pray they will know you are doing it. You are doing it now.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Thursday, May 23

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:4–11

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

The closer we grow to the light, the more aware we are of the darkness. The world will actually begin to appear darker as we grow in God's light. We will see pain more clearly. We will recognize suffering more deeply. Our hearts will break for those whose hearts are broken. The closer we get to the light, the greater our ability to distinguish it from the darkness.

His light calls for holy living. His light calls for courage. Because we live as light in this dark world, we will experience trials and tribulations. The darkness will come. Experiencing darkness and brokenness doesn't mean we've failed; it might actually mean we are growing in the knowledge of His will and His ways.

We live in the midst of darkness, but it does not define us. It surrounds us, but it doesn't rule us. As you walk through the local school or listen to conversations at the baseball field or look in the eyes of a co-worker, you will see the darkness. You will feel the discontentment, the despair. If you are not recognizing the darkness around you, you may not be fully living in His light.

As saints of Jesus, the Light of Life, how do we respond when we sense darkness? Too often, we choose to embrace the fear perpetrated by darkness, to believe its lies, to believe that its power is greater than the power of the One who is in us. God wants more than that for you. He wants more than that for us.

Scripture reminds us:

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Colossians 3:7–10

Christ has set us free from the power of darkness. We must remember that even when we are in the midst of darkness, our God is still at work. Even there, He is calling us to put on the "new self," not to fall back into the shadows of our old selves but to be renewed in Him and to grow in His image.

Regardless of where you find yourself today, you can praise God and rejoice. "Even the darkness will not be dark to you" (Psalm 139:12). Today, give thanks in all things. Today is a day to rejoice! In the midst of the threats of darkness, you can have peace. In difficult circumstances, in decision-making, in failing relationships, in the pain of heartache and loss, you can be at rest.

So pray continually, children of light. Stand firm in the faith. Pray and praise. Thank God today for His faithfulness, and trust Him for the outcomes of tomorrow. Rejoice, because this is the will of God.

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the fullness of your salvation.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to live in unity for the building up of the body.
- God, awaken my neighbor to your light and hope and glory.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to a posture of rejoicing in the knowledge that the outcome is yours today, tomorrow and forevermore.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Friday, May 24

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast." Matthew 9:14–15

We are invited to commune with God through prayer and fasting. The God of the universe is inviting you to draw closer to Him—not just bringing your good parts, not just bringing your spiritual parts, but bringing all of you to Him, even the deepest places in your mind, body, and soul.

The question John's disciples ask Jesus is birthed in comparison. "Why do we fast but your disciples don't?"

Sound familiar? You may compare your spirituality to that of another. You may wonder why someone raises his hands in worship or goes on a mission trip or serves in Sanctuary Youth. You may compare yourself to those around you. Jesus wants none of it. He just wants you. Right where you are, just as you are.

There's a greater call, a deeper truth that Jesus is teaching us here. He says, "It's me. It's just me. Don't worry about what anyone else is doing; just be with me."

Let us stay with Jesus, not getting caught up with questions regarding those around us. Let's be with Jesus. Let's learn from Jesus. Let's listen to Jesus. Let's love Jesus. We will grow tired if we spend our lives comparing ourselves to others. We will grow weary trying to measure up. Rest in knowing you are fearfully and wonderfully made and have all you need for godliness today.

Fasting leads to the humbling of the soul. In Psalm 35:13, David gives us a glimpse of this practice. "I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting."

John Piper says:

If we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.¹⁵

Don't snack on the small, passing things of the world. Come to the table of God. There is more than enough room for you there. Come, just as you are, and drink deeply. Feast on the great things He has for you. Celebrate His goodness.

¹⁵ John Piper, *A Hunger for God* (Crossway; Book Club Edition, 1997), end notes

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to an awareness of your faithfulness. Help me keep my eyes on you alone.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to pursue deeper communion with you as we pray and fast with urgency and expectancy.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the freedom of living for you alone, free from comparison.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to receive your invitation to a free life, a life with no striving, no comparing—a life of rest in you.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Saturday, May 25

*May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

Psalm 141:2

The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. Revelation 5:8

Smoke soon dissipates into the air. A fragrance fades over time. But our God never tires of hearing our prayers. Like a father who loves to hear the laughter of his child, so our Heavenly Father loves to hear the prayers of His children.

By praying, can we change the mind of our Sovereign God? Do our prayers matter? What difference is made when we communicate with God?

Prayer might often feel like a mystery. It's not. Just as the physical law of gravity tells us that a book will hit the floor when we drop it, we believe by faith that spiritual power is released through prayer. When we pray, we enter a realm that is different from this earthly space, and we have the opportunity to sense the omnipresence of our God. We sense the deeper hope of His glory. Like children, we begin to experience a wonder, an awe. Too often we complicate things; we forget the simplicity of communing, of resting, of celebrating, of

praying, of being in the presence of God in our everyday, ordinary lives.

It's important to remember that as we pray, we also have an Intercessor praying on our behalf. Jesus intercedes for us, and the Spirit groans with language we can't understand. Their intercessory prayers are lifted to the throne of our Father in the heavenly realms, and they are heard.

Elisabeth Elliot writes about this.

Generations of believers can testify that God meets us in prayer. He meets us because we invite Him to be with us, believing like children that our Father loves us. Our praying is not some kind of internal dialogue or an exercise in futility. God is listening.¹⁶

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the truth that you both hear me and want to hear from me.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to bring your saints faithfully before your throne, because we believe that you hear and that you care.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the simplicity of communing with you.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to live in communion with you all day, every day, until they are face-down in worship and adoration of you, our King.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Elliot, *Be Still My Soul: Reflections on Living the Christian Life* (Revell; Reissue Edition, 2017), 98



Sunday, May 26

"Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.'" Ezekiel 36:22–23

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel 36:25–28

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt." Ezekiel 36:33

Israel is promised restoration, despite its disobedience. Its people have profaned God's Name; they have been declared wicked, and they have walked away from God's will and His ways. Darkness and destruction have come over the land.

But the graciousness of God comes forth for the sake of His reputation, of His Name, of His love for His people. No nation, no person, no circumstance or trouble that we may bring upon ourselves can ruin the reputation of our Great God.

Ezekiel 36:25–28 expresses how we may have such hope in spite of our humanity. God will cleanse us. God *has* cleansed us; He has given us new hearts and spirits. No longer are our hearts corrupt or our spirits dead. God entered into our darkness and despair and gave us new hearts, new lives. Through His mercy, His grace, and His love, He has made us new. There is nothing we can do, no word we can speak, no act or measure we can take to cleanse or purify ourselves. It's God's work. It's God's way. God has made you holy, even as He is making you holy.

As you live and pray, choose to believe that your new heart is good because of Jesus. Remember that your heart matters to God. It matters so much that despite your sin, He saved you. Despite your errant ways and corrupt thinking, He saves, He loves, He cares.

You matter. As you seek Him more intimately, do so believing that you matter. This is a call to deeper belief, not just belief *in Him*, but belief in who *you are to Him*. Believe that your heavenly Father cares for, nurtures, and pursues you. Pray believing that your heart has been made new and your spirit is alive. Declare that our homes, towns, and "ruins will be rebuilt."

Father cares for, nurtures, and pursues you. Pray believing that your heart has been made new and your spirit is alive. Declare that our homes, towns, and "ruins will be rebuilt."

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the truth that because of your mercy, I have a new heart and a new spirit.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to live in the truth that we are your people and you are our God.
- God, awaken my neighbor to believe that you are the Lord of life, because you love them and because they matter to you.
- God, for these beloved, awaken them to a deeper belief that they've been given new hearts and that their hearts matters to you.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.



Monday, May 27

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

Daniel 9:17–19

Daniel senses an urgency to pray for a land and a people that have become corrupt. They have handed themselves over to useless gods that have no power. He prays fervently, with passion and compassion, for God's people. Daniel notes that he "learned from reading the Word of the LORD" (Daniel 9:2). To pray and live as the awakened ones in a dark and dying world, we too are called to learn to learn by reading and knowing and living His Word. Jesus tells us in John 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

John Piper observes:

What I have seen is that those whose prayers are most saturated with Scripture are generally most fervent and most effective in prayer. And where the mind isn't brimming with

the Bible, the heart is not generally brimming with prayer.¹⁷

We seek God not because we deserve an answer, but because we recognize our need for His mercy. Let's be people who seek God as we remember our own history and that of the generations before us. Let's seek God, believing that the Red Sea parted at His command, animals do His bidding, wind and waves still obey His voice. Let's seek God because captives have been freed, kingdoms have been restored, and lives have been resurrected.

Our greatest confidence in prayer comes from the fact that we bear His Name. God is committed to His Name. We are called by His Name. We give glory to His Name. It is by His Name that we are freed and restored, and it's for His Name's sake that we pray for this land to be healed.

May this be true for each of us as we come to the end of our thirty days of prayer and fasting. As His Word becomes infused in us, may prayer continue to flow from our thinking, interrupt our speaking, and produce righteous living. We have the privilege to come to our Father because we are His children, whom He dearly loves and in whom He is well pleased. As sinners who have come to trust in the Name of Jesus, we approach God by faith.

Arise, church! Above all else, seek first His kingdom and travail in prayer. Then sing praises to our God, believing for an awakening in our midst, for dry bones to live again.

May it be so.

¹⁷ John Piper, "How to Pray for a Desolate Church" (www.desiringgod.org, January 5, 1992), <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-to-pray-for-a-desolate-church>

Let's pray.

Personal Prayer Prompts

- God, awaken me to the power of your Word, the reality of your grace, and the joy of unwavering faith.
- God, awaken us as a Faith Family to hold firm to truth for your Name's sake.
- God, awaken my neighbor to the reality of your presence and the truth of your Word.
- God, for these beloved, awaken any dry bones that remain. In place of doubt, we place faith; in the place of unbelief, we believe—for your Name's sake.

May it begin in me, Jesus. Right here, Jesus. Right now, Jesus.

