
*Cedar Springs
Mission Devotionals
& Prayer Guide*

November 2017



<http://reclamationstories.org>

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Opening Prayer: Lord God, unless you build the house, all of our labor is in vain. Therefore, let us not go charging ahead with our own plans and our own designs, building our lives in whatever manner we see fit. But help us to always look to you as the master builder, for you alone can build something that is eternal. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 127:1-3

Journal: What does it mean to let God build your house? How will you do that? What might he need to demolish in order to build according to his design?

Reflection: So now the house is in place, shiny and bright. I have applause and esteem. They congratulate me for my flexibility and leadership and enthusiasm and what I've done and am doing. But this house of mine is somehow askew: it's my house, not the Lord's house. "In vain do the builders build." And yet I know in my heart that each step was taken because it was right and seemed to be the Lord's way. Yes, it was, but he had something else in mind for it.

Then another image rose spontaneously as I walked along. It was the Lord as an artillery captain who came in front of my fine house dragging his cannon and proceeded deliberately and systematically to shoot the whole damn thing apart. Story by story, wall by wall, brick by brick he gunned down the house that took me twenty-five years to build until only rubble was left, pieces of masonry on the ground, and I'm standing there with the debris of my life at my feet looking at the ruins.

The strange thing was this big wide grin on the Lord's face as he gunned it apart in high glee. It's as though he said to me: now watch the top story while I blow it apart. There! Now watch the second story: there it goes! Isn't that great? Now watch the back wall: hooray! Now the side walls, now finally the front and it's all gone. Isn't that marvelous! And he turned to me with joy and warmth and smiled on me with much encouragement. (*A Traveler toward the Dawn* by John Eagan)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

F & S are working alongside Arab believers toward the goal of seeing churches planted for those who do not have a church. Their focus is to mobilize, resource and train nationals for this purpose. Pray today for F as he finishes up work on a doctorate of ministry degree and for S as she runs a preschool reaching families with young children.

[Al Massira](#) is an online course for groups to use that presents the Christian faith through a chronological overview of the Bible. It centers the Christian faith in its original Middle Eastern context and includes a variety of integrated activities: viewing the films, open discussion, prayer, food and companionship. Pray today for those just starting the course, that they will find Jesus through it and begin a new life with him.

Closing Prayer: Build the house, O God, whatever that may mean, that we might not labor in vain. Amen.

Notes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Opening Prayer: Lord Jesus, I am such a mess. At my best - and at my worst - I am an odd combination of belief and unbelief. Help me to truly believe that you are good and that you care deeply for me and the things in my life and world. Help me to trust in you. Amen.

Scripture: Mark 9:14-29

Journal: Where in your soul are you a messy combination of belief and unbelief? What does it look like to have faith even in that messiness?

Reflection: God, today I resonate with the desperate cry in the Gospel, "I believe, help my unbelief." Sometimes I think I operate my life out of more doubt than faith. And yet I want to believe... and I do believe. I'm a complex creature. At times, I can believe with my head, while my body is still locked into patterns of skepticism and doubt. Faith is not yet in my muscles, my bones, my glands. Increase faith within me, O Lord. I'm sure that for faith to grow you will put me in situations where I'll need resources beyond myself. I submit to this process. Will this mean moving out on behalf of others, praying for them and trusting you to work in them? If so, then show me the who, what, when, and where, and I will seek to act at your bidding. Throughout I am trusting you to take me from faith to faith - from the faith I do have to the faith that I am in the process of receiving. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen. (*Prayers from the Heart* by Richard Foster)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

H and L serve in Asia by providing strategic leadership for colleagues serving in several major urban centers in Asia. Their role involves encouraging and coaching these co-workers in their ministries, as well as networking with others to make sure they have the resources and training that they need for their respective ministries. Pray today for H and L as they consider their next area of service after handing over their previous leadership positions to another couple.

Arab Baptist Theological Seminary's mission is serve the church in their region. They offer specialized learning resources and equips faithful men and women for effective service. Pray today for the faculty and students.

Closing Prayer: Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. Amen.

Notes.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Opening Prayer: Saving God, you set your heart on us and made us your own. May we listen with the ear of our hearts to the many ways your Word and your love will be present to us and formed in us this day. We ask this through Jesus, the Word made flesh. Amen. (*The Work of God* ed. by Judith Sutura)

Scripture: Hebrews 4:12-13

Journal: Is the word of God active in your life these days? Why or why not? How? How has God's word penetrated you lately? What was the effect?

Reflection: Torah (Law) is God's words that hit the target of the human condition. The noun *torah* comes from the verb, *yarah*, that means to throw something, a javelin, say, so that it hits its mark. The word that hits its mark is *torah*. In living speech, words are javelins hurled from one mind into another. Not all words are javelins; some are only tin cans, carrying information from one place to another. But God's word has this aimed, intentional, personal nature. When we are spoken to in this way, piercingly and penetratingly, we are not the same. These words get inside us and work their meaning in us. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Paul and Dori Pittman](#) currently serve as area directors for United World Mission's Latin America region. Paul is also project coordinator of UWM's Cuba Partnership Project. Pray today for UWM's Cuba Partnership Projects that God will raise up partner churches in the U.S. and Canada who will catch the vision to reach Cuba for Christ. Pray also for the Pittmans during their current home stay in the U.S. as they travel and visit colleges.

Located in South Knoxville and led by Milad and Theresa Guirguis, who are displaced from Egypt, the [Arabic Church](#) is spreading the word of God and hope by embracing Christians and Muslims from all Arabic countries. Most of the members of the congregation are from Iraq, Egypt, and Syria, and many are refugees. Pray today for Milad and Theresa and the members of their church.

Closing Prayer: O Lord, Thou didst strike my heart with Thy Word and I loved Thee. - *St. Augustine*

Notes.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Opening Prayer: O Lord, help us to not lose heart when times get hard, but instead help us to cling tightly to you. By your Spirit guard us, protect us, and renew us. Help us to realize that these light and momentary struggles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all comparison. Help us, O Lord, when things look bleak, to always keep our eyes firmly fixed on you - the unseen God - rather than on the visible circumstances around us. In the name and power of Jesus we pray. Amen. (*Journey to the Cross* by Jim Branch)

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Journal: How is God using brokenness in your life these days? How are you being broken? What is the fruit of it? How might he use it in the lives of others?

Reflection: I've been thinking a lot about the idea of brokenness for the past few weeks, and its value and necessity in the life of faith. None of us wants it, few if any would ever invite it, but no one can deny the unseen value of brokenness when it comes to the process of transformation. I know that personally the most broken times in my life have been the times when God has done some of his best and deepest and most lasting work within me. Brokenness simply does something in us (and then through us) that nothing else can do. In fact, 2 Corinthians 4:17 tells us that brokenness is *preparing for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all comparison*.

Brokenness shatters our sense of independence. It strips us of our need for control. It empties us of all pride and arrogance and agenda. And it makes us more and more like Jesus, *who although he was a son, learned obedience through what he suffered*. (Hebrews 5:8) But one of the main things that brokenness does is that it makes us into people who can be humbly and fruitfully given. We are not broken just for the sake of being broken. We are broken to be grown and then given. As my friend Robert once said, "We cannot be multiplied enough to be given, we can only be broken enough to be given." So brokenness has both a purpose and an intent. So if you are in the midst of being broken during this season where brokenness plays a prominent role, don't run away from it. Embrace it. God is making you into the one he dreamt you to be. Brokenness is not the end, just a means to a glorious end.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. - 2 Corinthians 4:18

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Joe and Cindy Platillero](#) proclaim the transforming presence of Jesus Christ through Biblical teaching and practical training to all who come through their doors. Their main ministry is through the Torchbearer Center where they have camps, conferences, and a small Bible School during the winter. Pray today for Spanish youth to truly seek Christ with their lives which feels impossible in this aggressively secular society.

[Athletes in Action](#), the sports ministry of Cru, is ministering to college athletes at the University of Tennessee. Rachel and Jason Stankus and Teg and Mikkel Tegelaar minister to and through the athletic department and are trusting God to build a spiritual movement that impacts the campus, community and world for Christ. Pray today for Jason & Rachel and for Teg & Mikkel as they continue to build relationships with student athletes.

Closing Prayer: Lord, when I am tempted to look around me, and let what I can see determine how I live my life, turn my eyes toward you and allow me to see the depths of your love and affection. Let the things that are unseen be the things that determine who I am and what I do. Let my hope be built on things that are eternal. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen. (*Journey to the Cross* by Jim Branch)

Notes:

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Opening Prayer: O Lord, let me be like a tree, planted by streams of water. Let me send my roots deeply down into you, so that I may bear fruit and my leaves may remain green, even in a time of drought. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 1:1-6

Journal: What would it look like to live your life like a tree planted by streams of water? How do we get there?

Reflection: Psalms 1 and 2 are a pair, working together to put our feet on the path that goes from the non-praying world in which we are constantly distracted and intimidated, into the praying world where we come to attention and practice adoration. For prayer is not only a matter of saying the right sort of words to the right kind of God. Our *being* is involved, the *way we are*. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Carlos and Sandy Rios](#) are planting Rivers of Grace Bible Church in the San Andres area of Guadalajara, Mexico. The church is growing and many new families are attending. Pray today for the church's adoption of an unreached people group - the Huichol Indians near Tepic, Nayarit.

[Becoming Like Christ](#) (BLC) is dedicated to equipping women to be all God means for them to be by providing a discipleship experience that is based on biblical principles in a small group of 10-12 followers of Jesus. Pray today for Kristin Cazana, the National Executive Director of BLC, and all the women currently involved in BLC.

Closing Prayer: O Lord, help me not to walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers. Help me, instead, to delight in your word and meditate on your law, that I might live my life rooted in you rather than blown about by the winds of circumstance. Amen.

Notes:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Opening Prayer: You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. (Psalm 139:1-6, NIV)

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-24

Journal: What does this Psalm stir up within you? What does it tell you about God? What does it tell you about yourself? How does it encourage you to live differently today?

Reflection: O Father, you know me inside and out. I can't hide anything from you. You know my thoughts and you know my fears. You know my insecurities and you know my anxieties. You are utterly familiar with all my dysfunctional ways. And yet, for some unknown reason, you still love me with a passion and an affection that I can never fully understand. It is simply too much for me to comprehend. You love me so fully and so completely that even my darkness is not dark to you. For you dreamt me into being and breathed your breath of life into the depths of my soul. Before the foundations of the world were laid, I was a beautiful thought in your mind; a thought that brought a huge smile to your face and great joy to your heart. I am your work of art, your masterpiece. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Your thoughts of me outnumber the sand. You think of me every second of every day; you can't get me off of your mind. You long to take me into your great heart of love again and again and again, constantly reminding me of the delight you take in me. You desperately want me to know the height and depth and breadth of your unfailing love, so that I will always know myself as you know me - as your very own. I am your beloved! Help me to live that way.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Chris and Donna Roberts](#) have been living in Müllheim, Germany for almost a year working with Young Life's German-speaking ministries. Chris is an Area Developer for Young Life's new service learning initiative in which he will help develop and implement a curriculum for service learning that uses Young Life methodology to reach German-speaking teenagers. Pray today for Young Life leaders Ryan and Emily in Munich as they introduce service clubs at a local university.

[Bethany Christian Services](#) is a global organization caring for orphans and vulnerable children on five continents. They manifest the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services such as adoption, family support, foster care, pregnancy counseling, refuge services and infertility. Pray today for the staff as they work with families to facilitate adoptions.

Closing Prayer: 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. Amen. (Psalm 139:23-24, NIV)

Notes.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Opening Prayer: O God, teach me to pray and then help me pray. Amen.

Scripture: Colossians 4:2-6

Journal: How, where, and when will you pray today? Do it.

Reflection: We prepare to pray not by composing our prayers but ourselves; forming the inner life so that it is adequate to the reception of truth, not just the acquisition of facts. But when we engage in the act of prayer itself, there is no preparing, no getting the right words, no posture to take, no mood to assume. We simply do it. Prayer is primal speech. We do not first learn how to do it, and then proceed to do it; we do it, in the doing we find out what we are doing, and then deepen and mature in it. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

M is living in Asia working with an unreached people group. She is trusting that God will open doors for the gospel and empower local brothers and sisters to make disciples among them. Pray today M and her young family as they return to Asia from a visit to the U.S. that they will be sensitive to God's voice and guidance as they seek to serve him.

The [Bible Society of Egypt](#) is the largest Arabic Bible publishing operation in the world. They are publishing the Scriptures in a variety of formats and media (print, audio, visual), with each product designed for a particular social, economic, age, and cultural interest group. Pray today for the staff as they perform the day-to-day tasks required to publish the Bibles.

Closing Prayer: O God, help me to know that the only way I will ever learn to pray well is by praying much. Give me the grace and the strength and the desire to pray much. Amen.

Notes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Opening Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have taken me for your very own; I belong to you. Help the knowledge of this *taking* to give me the strength and the courage to live my life this day as your chosen child. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-7

Journal: What does it mean to you that God has taken you as his very own? How does that knowledge impact your daily life?

Reflection: To live a spiritual life, we have to claim for ourselves that we are “taken” or “chosen.” Let me try to expand a bit on these words. When I know that I am chosen, I know that I have been seen as a special person. Someone has noticed me in my uniqueness and has expressed a desire to know me, to come closer to me, to love me. When I write to you that, as the Beloved, we are God’s chosen ones, I mean that we have been seen by God from all eternity and seen as unique, special, precious beings. It is very hard for me to express well the depth of the meaning of the word “chosen” has for me, but I hope you are willing to listen to me from within. From all eternity, long before you were born and became a part of history, you existed in God’s heart. Long before your parents admired you or your friends acknowledged your gifts or your teachers, colleagues and employers encouraged you, you were already “chosen.” The eyes of love had seen you as precious, as of infinite beauty, as of eternal value. When love chooses, it chooses with a perfect sensitivity for the unique beauty of the chosen one. (*Life of the Beloved* by Henri J. M. Nouwen)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Mostafa and Mona Sharkawy](#) serve among Arab Muslims in the U.K. Their goals are to see Arabic churches arise from Muslim background believers, to see new generations of leaders from Muslim believers, and to teach and prepare them for future ministry. Pray today for the growing ministry inside the Immigration Removal Centre as they anticipate more refugees arriving to the United Kingdom. Pray also for the follow-up ministry that Mona is doing with the Syrian refugee women in England.

[Bridges International](#) serves the needs of international students adjusting to living and studying at the University of Tennessee. Pray today for the international students on campus that they may understand the love of Jesus during this semester.

Closing Prayer: O God, I belong to you. I am your beloved child. Help me to live my life out of that truth today. Amen.

Notes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Opening Prayer: Sing to God, O kingdoms of earth, sing praise to the Lord, to him who rides the ancient skies above, who thunders with mighty voice. Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies. You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God! (*Psalm 68:32-35*)

Scripture: Psalm 68:32-35

Journal: Do you live with a sense of empowerment in your life? Why, or why not? How does it show itself?

Reflection: How do I miss it? It is there, it is available, but somehow I rarely seem to experience it. Is it just me?

I tend to live my life with a constant sense that I am at the mercy of my circumstances. At times I live in reaction to them, and at others I live in spite of them. But there is more. There is something that I am missing. Something that I am rarely in touch with - God's power. But here it is, right in Psalm 68: "The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people." (v. 35) God wants me to live my life empowered by him. The same power by *which he rides the ancient skies above* and the same power that *raised Christ Jesus from the dead* is available to me. That's a lot of power.

Why then, do I not experience it more often? Could it be that in order to live an empowered life, you must be aware of, and in touch with, the Source of that power on a regular basis? Or could it be that somewhere deep inside, I don't really believe that his power is available to someone like me? Who knows? I do know that it is something I am going to reflect upon in the days ahead. It is something I am going to ask God about. It is something I am going to pray for. I am tired of getting my ass kicked by my fears, anxieties, and insecurities. It is time that I take a stand and use the power that is available to me - resurrection power - to live the victorious (and I do not use that word often) life that God wants to live in and through me. What that looks like, I have no idea. But I am excited about the possibilities. *Praise be to God!*

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

E is part of a team that has translated the New Testament for a large South Asian language group. Beyond this goal of translating the New Testament is the larger goal of seeing the scriptures systematically read and studied by individuals and groups. Pray today for E and the growth of anti-Christian sentiment in the countries where she serves.

[Bridge Refugee Services](#) facilitates the resettlement of refugees in East Tennessee. Bridge empowers refugees to become self-sufficient, and works closely with many volunteers, employers, and churches that sponsor refugee families. Pray today for all the refugee families that have recently settled in Knoxville and those that are waiting to come to the United States. Pray that God will remove the barriers that prevent them from entering our country.

Closing Prayer: O great and awesome God, you give power and strength to your people. May we live empowered, victorious lives in you this day. Amen.

Notes:

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Opening Prayer: Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Scripture: Psalm 130:5-7

Journal: How do you listen? How is waiting a part of that?

Reflection: If I did actually put my hope in the Lord, and more specifically in his word, I would do a lot more waiting, it seems. I would train my soul to sit still and wait and listen until the word of the Lord had revealed itself to me. Then, and only then, would I move, or act, or speak. Unfortunately, I don't do that very often; which makes me think that I don't really put my hope in the word of the Lord at all, but in my own. I tend to talk a lot. I tend to fill all of the space and give him no room to get a word in edge-wise. I tend to make myself so busy telling and speaking and acting that it shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that my trust is not in his word, but my own. Which makes me want to stop altogether. It makes me want to shut up. It makes me want to sit still. It makes me want to listen. It makes me want to be like the watchmen and simply wait for the Lord. Maybe I'll give that a try.

I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen, and accrue what I hear into myself. . . .and let sounds contribute toward me. - Walt Whitman

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Manuel and Annabella Valverde](#) are involved in church planting and leadership training in Guatemala. Manuel started the Francisco Lacueva Theological Seminary (STFL) in 2012 and they now have 14 students. Pray today for the Valverdes and their work in Guatemala.

[Campus Renewal Ministries](#) is a National Christian Ministry devoted to seeing transformation on college campuses for God's glory. They have been around for over 15 years and work with colleges across America. Pray today for their leaders to have a renewed vision for ministry on UT's campus as they serve students.

Closing Prayer: O God, teach me to listen. At times I get so busy speaking and telling that I leave no room for listening, and listening is where it all begins. Amen.

Notes:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Opening Prayer: How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along! It's like costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, flowing down Aaron's beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes. It's like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion. Yes, that's where God commands the blessing, ordains eternal life. (*The Message*)

Scripture: Psalm 133:1-3

Journal: How do you define unity? How do you seek unity? What does it look like to live in community?

Reflection: What does *living together in unity* really mean? And what does that even look like? Does it mean that everyone agrees with each other all the time? Probably not. If that were the case, unity would only be about managing outcomes and controlling decisions, and I think it is much deeper and much more beautiful than that.

If I am really honest, I have to admit that all too often my definition of unity has more to do with everyone finally sharing my opinion about something. As long as it's going my way everything is great, but as soon as it heads a different direction I can get pretty defensive and insecure. That is definitely not unity. In fact, it seems like the direct opposite of it.

I think unity has more to do with who we are to each other and how we are loving than it does with who is right and who is wrong. It is a spirit among us, a spirit of love. It is a determination to be *for* each other regardless of the circumstances, and to stand with each other even when things are difficult. It is a commitment to love and serve each other, rather than a demand to be loved and served. It is a determination to operate out of love, rather than fear. It is about being compassionate, rather than contentious. It is about a desire to listen, rather than a need to tell. It is about having open hands, rather than clenched fists.

The image of precious oil being poured on the head is a great one. Each of us is a container of precious oil that was given to us--breathed into us at creation - to be poured out on those around us. Unity, therefore, is about each of us bringing that precious oil - our truest and best selves - to the body, without demand or manipulation (*no forcing and no holding back* in the words of Rilke) and pouring it out on the heads of those brothers and sisters we are living in community with. For it is then and there that God will *bestow his blessing, even life forevermore*.

So maybe the question we should be asking ourselves is, "What does it mean to bring our best and truest selves to the body and pour it out for love?" Maybe the answer to that question will help us to figure out what it means to *live together in unity*.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Vitaly and Oksana Voinov](#) live in Moscow, Russia. Vitaly is working with the Institute for Bible Translation (IBT) in Russia/CIS as IBT's director. IBT has been serving the non-Slavic peoples of the former Soviet Union for four decades by translating the Holy Scriptures - Bibles, New Testaments, individual Bible books, and illustrated Children's Bibles. Pray today for Vitaly and his family.

[Child Evangelism Fellowship](#) (CEF) is committed to the evangelism of boys and girls through Good News Clubs, the Tennessee Valley Fair and any other means to reach the children of the Knoxville community. Good News Club is a ministry in which trained teachers meet with groups of children in schools, homes, community centers, churches, apartment complexes and just about anywhere the children can easily and safely meet with their parent's permission. Pray today for the families of the children that attend the Good News Clubs each week that they may know and understand the love of Jesus.

Closing Prayer: O God, forgive me when I come to believe that unity in the body is when everyone finally shares my opinion. Amen.

Notes:

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Opening prayer: Give us your peace, O Lord, in the midst of our chaos. Speak your love into the middle of our fear. Bring your healing to our broken and wounded hearts. Breathe your Spirit onto and into us, and send us to be your presence in a lost and broken world. Amen.

Scripture: John 20:19-22

Journal: What does this scene stir up within you? How has Jesus spoken love into your fear lately? How has he offered you his peace? How is he sending you to do that into the lives of others?

Reflection:

into the midst of their fear
jesus came
and stood among them
offering his peace
and sending them
as he was sent
breathing his spirit
into them as they
embarked on their mission

they were now the god-breathed
sent to offer the life and peace
they had received
by the breath of his spirit

and now it is us
we are the presence of Christ
to a broken world
we are to offer
our risen wounds
as sources of healing and life
we are bearers and sharers
of his peace
we are the mouths
through which he breathes
his life-giving spirit

we are sent as he was sent
on the winds of his breath
to speak love into fear

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Andy and Bev Warren](#) serve with an MTW team that is involved in HIV/AIDS work and church planting through the Ethiopia Aids Care and Treatment (ACT) Project. The project targets slum communities in Addis Ababa which contain the neediest people in the community - large percentages of women with small children. In recent years, the project has served more than 500 AIDS-affected families, reaching more than 1,200 people. In the last few months, the government of Ethiopia has declared a state of emergency because of increasing protests. Pray today for Andy and Bev who are now in the U.S. for home assignment through the end of this year, visiting with supporters and enjoying their family.

[Choices Resource Center](#) is a Christian, life-affirming pregnancy resource center offering services to help people facing decisions regarding pregnancy, parenting, purity, and post abortion healing. Pray today for each young woman who will visit this center this week.

Closing Prayer: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. - *St. Francis of Assisi*

Notes:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Opening Prayer: Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! (*Psalm 107:1-3, 8*)

Scripture: Psalm 107:1-43

Journal: What is your story with God right now? How do the stories of Psalm 107 speak to it? Is there one that seems most relevant right now? Why? If not, try writing your own story with God into the psalm.

Reflection: All prayer is prayed in a story, by someone who is in the story. There are no storyless prayers. Story is to prayer what the body is to the soul, the circumstances in which it takes place. And prayer is to story what the soul is to the body, the life without which it would be a corpse. Prayers are prayed by people who live stories. Every life is a story. We are not always aware that we are living a story; often it seems more like a laundry list. But story it is. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[*Kenton and Ariana Wood*](#) serve in Guadalajara, Mexico as church planters. Pray today for Kenton who oversees a mother church that has six services on Sunday. Pray also for the Purépecha Indians in the nearby state of Michoacan that they may be reached with the gospel.

[*Christian Leadership Concepts*](#) (CLC) is an organization that seeks to find and deploy the natural male disciple-makers in our city, asking them to pour into other men via a two-year disciple-making process. Pray today for the men currently in the two-year discipleship groups.

Closing Prayer: O Jesus, speak to me during this time about the story you are telling, the story I was made for. Open my eyes, Lord, to the ways that story is being told - and lived - in the events and circumstances of this day. Show me how all that happens to me this day echoes your larger Story if only I will keep my heart focused on you. In your name I pray. Amen. (*The Blue Book* by Jim Branch)

Notes:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Opening Prayer: O God, unless you speak we will never be anything more than formless and void. Speak your life-creating word into our hearts and souls this day. Amen.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-31

Journal: How has God spoken something new into your life or heart lately? How has he turned your chaos into creation? How are you giving God space to speak his creation into your life today?

Reflection: The pre-Genesis condition of the cosmos is our own inner life: *tohu* and *bohu*, without form and void. Things are not right; we are not right. Our emotions bolt and stampede. Our thoughts run riot. Our bodies hurt. Our appetites play havoc with our virtue. We can't, it seems, direct our own destiny with dignity or wisdom for ten consecutive minutes.

And so we pray. Directed by the Psalms, we begin our praying by listening. What do we hear?

And God said, Let there be light. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, one day.
And God said, Let there be a firmament. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.
And God said, Let the waters . . . be gathered together. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.
And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.
And God said, Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.
And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures. . .
And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Disorder gives way, piecemeal, to order. Chaos becomes cosmos. The language is rhythmic - cadence and repetition and rhyme. God speaks creation into existence: "He spoke and it came to be; he commanded and it stood forth" (Ps. 33:9). The rhythmic language makes a rhythmic creation. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Eric and Beth Yodis](#) are facilitating church planting in eastern Ukraine. Eric and Beth returned to the Ukraine last year to help with church planting in Kiev. Pray today that God would open the hearts and minds of church leaders throughout Ukraine to see the need for church planting.

Cedar Springs partners with [Redeemer City to City](#) to plant churches in urban areas around the world. Pray for all the church planters that are supported throughout the world, especially those in Europe who have opportunities to build relationships with refugees from the Middle East who have settled there.

Closing Prayer: Lord, teach us to listen, for unless you speak, we will never be all you desire us to be. Amen.

Notes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Opening Prayer: Lord Jesus, flow like a river - like many rivers - in and through my life this day, just like you said you would. That I might be who you made me to be, and thus do what you made me to do. In your name and for your glory. Amen.

Scripture: John 7:37-39

Journal: What is your sense of God's flow within (and through) your life on a daily basis? What enables it? What stifles it? Do you truly believe that this is the kind of life God desires for you?

Reflection:

I believe in all that has never yet been spoken.
I want to free what waits within me
so that what no one has dared to wish for

may for once spring clear
without my contriving.

If this is arrogant, God, forgive me,
but this is what I need to say.
May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing you as no one ever has,

streaming through widening channels
into the open sea.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

J & F live and work in one of the poorest and most heavily populated states in a country in Asia. They are seeking to make a difference in this state in both physical and spiritual realms. They have been operating a micro-finance business that is creating self-sustaining means of support for churches and church plants as well as continuing to provide funds for the installation of hand pumps to provide clean water to needy areas of the state. Pray today for J & F as they are in the U.S. on home assignment until later this year.

The mission of [Collegiate Abbey](#) is to create environments of spiritual and personal growth, to shepherd with the heart of Jesus Christ, and to serve strategically to effectively meet the needs of the collegiate community. Britton Sharp is the Director of this ministry at the University of Tennessee that partners with the body of Christ to serve their neighbors and our Savior for the glory of God. Pray today for Britton and his family.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to love like you. Rid my heart and soul of all that is not love. Amen.

Notes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Opening Prayer: Lord, you know me better than I know myself. Your Spirit pervades every moment of my life. Thank you for the grace and love you shower on me. Thank you for your constant, gentle invitation to let you into my life. Forgive me for the times I have refused that invitation, and closed myself off from you. Help me in the day to come, to recognize your presence in my life, to open myself to you, to let you work in me, to your greater glory. Amen. (*The Spiritual Exercises* by St. Ignatius)

Scripture: John 21:1-14

Journal: What helps you to recognize Jesus in your life? How will you cultivate the ability to recognize him more often?

Reflection: *Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus. (John 21:4)*

It seems that one of the disciplines most necessary during the Easter season is the discipline of *recognizing*. After all, the risen Christ could appear at any moment and we must pay careful attention, lest we miss him - just ask the disciples. They were so busy not catching fish that they were oblivious to the fact that Jesus had been standing on the shore, at least long enough to build a fire and get some coals hot. Why had they missed him? The simple answer is that they were preoccupied. They were so busy with the task at hand that they were paying no attention to anything else. I get that. I can get caught up in the comings and goings of my day just as easily. Busyness, preoccupation, and hurry can blind me to the fact that Jesus is standing right there on the shoreline of my life and I have not recognized him. I must learn how to slow down, to pay attention. I must learn how to go through the course of my days with an eye out for the Risen One. I must not let the chaos and activity of everyday life sweep me away and distract me from the real reason I am here in the first place - Jesus.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Isik Abila](#) hosts a satellite TV program called "Light for the Heart" on the Kanal Hayat Turkish-language channel. She also hosts a live call-in program that is simulcast on the Turkish and Farsi channels throughout the Middle East and Europe. These TV programs deliver the message of love, healing, and freedom through Christ Jesus, reflecting on Isik's own life experience. Pray today for her plans to start dubbing TV programs into the Indonesian language due to the great demand and interest from Indonesian seekers. As the largest Muslim-populated country in the world, the opportunity to share the gospel is unprecedented.

The mission of [Compassion Coalition](#) is to inform, prepare, and unite churches to transform lives and communities through the love of Christ. They strive to walk alongside Knoxville-area churches who earnestly desire to slow down and respond to the cry of the suffering, the broken, and the abandoned within their congregations and out in the community. Pray today for the work of this ministry in Knoxville and for the staff that works with Executive Director Grant Standefer.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me the grace and the ability to recognize you today, however you may come to me. Amen.

Notes:

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Opening Prayer: Late have I loved you, O Beauty, so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! And behold, you were within me and I was outside, and there I sought for you, and in my deformity, I rushed headlong into the well-formed things that you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you. - *St. Augustine*

Scripture: John 21:15-19

Journal: Do you love him more than these? What is your *these*? How is he asking you to follow him these days?

Reflection: The resurrected Jesus gets right to the point. He asks us the very same question he asked Simon Peter: "Do you love me more than these?" It is *the* question of the entire spiritual life. Do we love him more than these? Do we love him more than our families? Do we love him more than our friends? Do we love him more than our careers? Do we love him more than our very selves? For until we love him, above and before all else, we cannot possibly do the work he has given us to do - *feed his lambs*. For if we do not love Jesus first and foremost, we cannot possibly feed his lambs, we can only feed on his lambs.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

We support a family that is serving at a sanatorium for chest diseases, focusing on bringing holistic healing for body and soul to the semi-nomadic people of the area by providing high quality healthcare for them. Our supported worker serves in the Mobile Dental Clinic that was donated to the [Annoor Sanatorium](#) to further the outreach and care to Bedouin in remote areas. The clinic is a great resource to meet the felt needs of the poor in places where it is hard or impossible to receive any kind of dental care. Pray today for the safety of these workers.

[Core Leadership](#) is a ministry of spiritual formation and leadership development. Its mission is to help strengthen and encourage the life of leaders, in the Knoxville area and beyond, by the means of spiritual nurture and leadership development. Jim Branch is the director of Core Leadership and is actively involved in the lives of people all over the city of Knoxville and beyond, as well as being active in the Powell community, where he lives. Pray today for Jim and his family.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to love you before all else today. For only then can I truly love others the way you want me to - fully and freely.

Notes:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Opening Prayer: O God, Lord of the Sabbath, you made the Sabbath year for the rest, renewal, and replenishment of the land. May we follow your lead and create time and space for our lives and our souls to be renewed and replenished as well. It is all a part of your grand design. Amen.

Scripture: Leviticus 25:1-7

Journal: Why was the Sabbath year instituted? What was the desired result? How and when do you allow your soul to lie fallow? If you do not, why not?

Reflection:

fallow

every now
and again
the land must
simply lie fallow
in order to be all
that it was
intended to be

the same is true
of the soul

there is
a deep need
and a great necessity
in the life of the spirit
for our hearts
and our souls
to lie fallow

to create
a time
and a space
where we do
nothing
but rest
and recover

a time where we
accomplish nothing
produce nothing
achieve nothing

a time where
we do not try
to be helpful
or available

but only
replenish and renew
our souls
for years of
future fruitfulness

but o how
difficult the task
how hard it is
to create
and maintain
this time and space
to hold onto it
doggedly
against all
that would try
to fill it up

it takes
an enormous
amount
of discipline
and wisdom
and courage
to let the soul
just lie there
undisturbed

that is why
so few
ever do it

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Jeff and Ellen](#) work among unreached people groups in two restricted access countries of Southeast Asia catalyzing Church Planting Movements. Pray today for the many other unreached people groups of Southeast Asia, as Jeff and Ellen help others engage new groups. Also pray for more sensitivity in their team to what the Holy Spirit is telling them in the daily decisions they make in how to move forward with the Tai Lue.

[Cru](#), formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ, is a campus organization that seeks to share the gospel with students through relationships, small group studies and larger events like retreats and mission trips. John Strange leads Cru at the University of Kentucky. Pray today for the staff of Cru and the students involved in their ministry this semester.

Closing Prayer: O God, full of compassion, I commit myself to you, in whom I am, and live and know. Be the goal of my pilgrimage and my rest by the way. Let my soul take refuge from the crowding turmoil of worldly thought beneath the shadow of your wings. Let my heart, this sea of restless waves, find peace in you, O God. Amen. - St. Augustine

Notes.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Opening Prayer: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalm 23:1-3, *ESV*)

Scripture: Psalm 23:2-3

Journal: What place do silence and solitude occupy in your life? What role do they play? How might God be *making you lie down in green pastures or leading you beside quiet waters*? How is he *restoring your soul* these days? Are you resistant to the practices of rest and renewal? Why?

Reflection: While teaching, lecturing, and writing about the importance of solitude, inner freedom, and peace of mind, I kept stumbling over my own compulsions and illusions. What was driving me from one book to another, one place to another, one project to another? ... What was turning my vocation to be a witness to God's love into a tiring job? These questions kept intruding themselves into my few unfilled moments and challenging me to face my restless self. Maybe I spoke more about God than with him. Maybe my writing about prayer kept me from a prayerful life. Maybe I was more concerned about the praise of men and women than the love of God. Maybe I was slowly becoming a prisoner of people's expectations instead of a man liberated by divine promises. ... I had succeeded in surrounding myself with so many classes to prepare, lectures to give, articles to finish, people to meet, phone calls to make, and letters to answer, that I had come quite close to believing that I was indispensable. ... While complaining about too many demands, I felt uneasy when none were made. While speaking about the burden of letter writing, an empty mailbox made me sad. While fretting about tiring lecture tours, I felt disappointed when there were no invitations. While speaking nostalgically about an empty desk, I feared the day on which that would come true. In short: while desiring to be alone, I was frightened of being left alone. The more I became aware of these paradoxes, the more I started to see how much I had indeed fallen in love with my own compulsions and illusions, and how much I needed to step back and wonder, "Is there a quiet stream underneath the fluctuating affirmations and rejections of my little world?" (*The Genesee Diary* by Henri Nouwen)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

Sybil Baloyi lives in Mozambique and runs a preschool for orphaned and vulnerable children. Pray today for new neighborhood groups started by the youth after last summer's Word of Life Youth Camp that had an attendance of over 130 youth from Hlauleka and different places.

The [Cedar Springs Adoption Ministry](#) is a group of individuals and families who have a heart for adoption and foster care and for providing support for other individuals and families starting or going through the adoption/foster care process. Pray today for couples who seeking to adopt as they wait and prepare their hearts to receive a child into their family.

Closing Prayer: God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. (Psalm 23:1-3, *The Message*)

Notes:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Opening Prayer: Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! (*Psalms 118:29*)

Scripture: Psalm 34:1-22

Journal: Do you *truly* believe that God is good? What makes you say that? How do pain and suffering and struggle affect your perception of God's goodness? What is the relationship between your perception of God's goodness and your circumstances?

Reflection:

good

in the midst of
the pain and chaos of life
the temptation arises to ask
am I being punished somehow
is that how it works
are you really good, o god
and what does that even mean

it is an epic struggle
to truly believe
in the goodness of god
especially in the presence
of the great sadness
it is a struggle indeed

but your goodness o god
is much bigger than
my circumstances
it simply has to be

your goodness
is not dependent upon
or determined by
my perception of
whatever is going on
in my life at the moment
for if it is then
heaven help me
i am in for
one hell of a ride

your goodness
must be deeper
and more substantial
than any circumstance
life could hand me
for it is rooted

in eternity
and thus
not easily seen
this side of heaven
unless of course
we are given eyes
to see

you are good
o lord
and that is that
when i choose
to believe
in your goodness
in spite of appearances
there is a rootedness
born in me
a solid place
from which to live
a on rock on which
to set my feet
in spite of whatever
storms might come

help me
o god
to believe
in your goodness
help me
to see
all of life
not as
right and privilege
but as
gift and gratitude
for you alone
o lord
are truly good

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Ron and Amy Barber](#) are equipping the next generation of church planters. Their ministry at International Graduate School of Leadership (IGSL) in the Philippines prepares students for ministry in cross-cultural contexts around the world. Pray today for students that Ron is teaching from Vietnam who are planning to connect with unreached people groups in the northern hill country after graduating.

The [CSPC Refugee Ministry](#), under the leadership of Almaz Gemechu, assists with resettling international refugees who arrive in Knoxville. There are many opportunities for volunteers to help with this mission. Pray today for Almaz and all the volunteers with the Refugee Ministry. To see an ongoing list of opportunities to serve, go to <http://cspc.net/current-refugee-min>.

Closing Prayer: O Lord, you are good all the time, and all the time you are good. Help me to fully believe that it's true, and to never allow my circumstances to influence or determine what I really believe about you.

Notes:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Opening Prayer: Satisfy us in the morning, O Lord, with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Amen. (*Psalm 90:14*)

Scripture: Psalm 90:17

Journal: How do you allow the beauty of the Lord to rest upon you? What does that mean? How does this happen in prayer?

Reflection: There are two great mystical traditions in the life of prayer, sometimes labeled apophatic and kataphatic. *Apophemi* is the Greek “no;” *kataphemi* is “yes.” Apophatic prayer is nay saying, the *via negativa*. It shuts its eyes so as not to be distracted or diverted from the pure being of God. Kataphatic prayer is yea saying, the *via affirmativa*. It opens its eyes, letting lights and colors, icons and incense draw us into their, and our, source in God.

There is certainly a place for apophatic prayer: our imaginations are rampant with neurotic lust and escapist longings that get projected against a cosmic widescreen we ignorantly name God. Marvel and miracle, sensation and sentiment, doomsday fear and infantile eroticism are thrown together and made into what we supposed to be a god. Prayers are constantly being addressed out of and to such fantasies. Such prayers need fasting, and plenty of it, to purge them of their fantasies.

But kataphatic prayer is surely normative: the Psalms train us in it, the incarnation confirms it, and the sacraments perpetuate it. The rubric for apophatic prayer is, “fold your hands, bow, your head, shut your eyes, and we’ll pray.” But the psalmists are kataphatic to a man, to a woman - they take us to the theater where we see “mountains skip like rams” (Ps. 114:4) and hear “trees clap their hands” (Isa. 55:12); they show us how to pray with our eyes open, wide open. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Phil](#) has been serving in Eurasia for over 10 years. His focus has been the Tatar people, a largely Muslim people group. Phil has worked with others in launching a local organization that provides language instruction with the goal of helping to equip believers to bring the light of the gospel to the least-reached in their own language. Pray today for two men who often visit with Phil that they will understand what the gospel means to them as Phil shares stories from the Bible.

[Development Associates International](#) (DAI) is an international fellowship of leader developers, passionate about helping Christian leaders grow and have a transformative impact on their local communities. They focus on developing a leader's spiritual growth and effectiveness at managing people, money, and organizations - using Biblical servant leadership as the core principle. Pray today for Jane Overstreet, the President & CEO of DAI.

Closing Prayer: Let your beauty, O Lord, rest upon us, now and forevermore.

Notes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Opening Prayer: O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. (*Psalms 139:1-6*)

Scripture: Psalm 139:7-18

Journal: What does Psalm 139 stir within you today?

Reflection: Prayer is not a matter of waking up God or making God pay attention to us. God is always with us, in us, around us, under us, over us. God's presence pervades the universe, and that presence is personal. God loves each of us all the time. The problem has to do with us and our ability to quell the noise that goes on constantly in our minds...So we need to learn to focus on God, to rest in God, to listen to God. Prayer is all about getting through the barriers that keep us from God...In the end, it is God who does the praying. God enfolds us in his love and care in ways that connect with our deepest needs and our deepest wishes. (*Meditative Prayer: Entering God's Presence* by Richard V. Peace)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

T works with the SEED Company (an affiliate organization of Wycliffe Bible Translators) in their mission to promote and accelerate Bible translation by indigenous churches and organizations in their home countries. T watches over 12 translation projects that represent 35 languages, many of which are just receiving the first Scripture in their own language. Pray today for a translation partner in Asia whose building was flooded, that God will provide necessary connections to find a new building.

[Echo Resources](#) is a ministry to ministers. ER's vision is for ministers to live in deeper intimacy with Christ, family and community, and to thus have greater effect for God's Kingdom. Pray today for Buddy Odom as he leads this ministry.

Closing Prayer: Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (*Psalms 139:23-24*)

Notes:

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 23

Opening Prayer: O how we look forward to that day, O God, when people of every tribe, tongue, and nation will be gathered together before your throne, worshipping you with one voice. It is what our hearts - whether we know it or not - most deeply long for. Amen.

Scripture: Revelation 7:9-12

Journal: What is your vision of how and where prayer was intended to happen? What is the communal nature of prayer? What is your experience of it? How will you strive to make prayer a more corporate practice in the days ahead?

Reflection: Prayer requires community. Prayer is not possible outside of, apart from, or in spite of the praying community. God calls his people to come before him and hear his word, to obey his commands and receive his blessings. We hear that call and come. We bow our heads and close our eyes. We pray. We open our eyes, look around and see, sometimes to our great surprise, that others are there also.

The assumption that prayer is what we do when we are alone - the solitary soul before God - is an egregious, and distressingly persistent, error. We imagine a lonely shepherd on the hills composing lyrics to the glory of God. We imagine a beleaguered soul sinking in a swamp of trouble calling for help. But our imaginations betray us. We are part of something before we are anything, and never more so than when we pray. Prayer begins in community. (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[A and B](#) are serving in a Creative Access country. Their family is building friendships and seeing them mature as A. continues to teach at a local university and serve the teachers and students there. Pray today for this family as they grow relationships and share the gospel with friends, teachers and students.

[Church of the Redeemer](#) in Maryville is one of Cedar Springs' newest church plants. Pray today for Pastor Dave Strunk and those that are now attending services each Sunday at Alcoa High School. For details, visit churchotr.com.

Closing Prayer: Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen. (*Revelation 7:12*)

Notes:

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Opening Prayer: Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3, *ESV*)

Scripture: Psalm 98:1-9

Journal: What does Psalm 98 teach you about prayer? How does Psalm 98 speak to your heart? How does it speak for your heart? How do we pray this prayer in community? How will we pray it in community today?

Reflection: Liturgy pulls our prayers out of the tiresome business of looking after ourselves and into the exhilarating enterprise of seeing and participating in what God is doing. We are drawn into a large generosity where everyone is getting and receiving, offering and praising. We are drawn to the place where people are being loved and where they love us. We are deepened into the practice of humanity in covenant with God that goes both beneath and beyond our self-defined religious desire. We are put beside people who help us and whom we can help. Liturgy breaks us out of the isolation of ego and emotion where we are cut off from the large winds and landscapes of grace. God wants us outside the walls that quarantine us in our ego-sickness; he pulls us into the great dance of grace in which we find ourselves moving rhythmically and joyfully with partner after partner. *Selah* - indeed! (*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

L and E serve in a Creative Access country. *L* is working to make evangelical literature available to the nations so that people can come to Christ. Pray today for *L* and *E* who recently returned to the U.S. that they may enjoy time with their family and new grandbabies! Pray also for their future plans to move to a different Asian country to reach youth who have defected from a closed country.

Logan and Melissa Keck are church planters with the [Egleston Project](#) in Boston. This project has planted Christ the King, JP/Roxbury. The Kecks ask that you pray for spiritual growth and leadership development for the many new believers and spiritually young believers in their congregation. Pray today that the Lord would draw people to himself and lead Logan, Melissa and their team to fruitful new relationships.

Closing Prayer: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:4-9, *ESV*)

Notes:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Opening Prayer: As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. (*Psalm 42:1-5, ESV*)

Scripture: Psalm 42:1-11

Journal: What does Psalm 42 stir up within you? How does it speak to the struggles of your own heart? How does it offer hope?

Reflection:

losing myself

there it goes again
that familiar struggle
between desire and need
between love and fear

it is such a fine line
one that is so easily
and subtly crossed
from i love you
to i need you

it is amazing how
something so beautiful
can become so tainted
in a matter of seconds

it is like a switch
is flipped inside
and i suddenly forget who i am
and instead start to grasp
for someone to be

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Paul and Karan Davis](#) have been working with TEAM in France since 1978 in church-planting ministries. In 2010, they moved to the city of Pontcharra, strategically located at the junction of the valleys, major highways, and railways that link the cities of Albertville, Chambéry, and Grenoble. Pray today for Karan who continues to recover from a fall that broke her hip. The doctors have said that the bone is healing well and she will not need an additional surgery.

Volunteers provide weekly [English classes at Cedar Springs](#) for those who need to improve their language skills. Classes meet on Thursdays in the morning and in the evening. There is an optional Bible study held after the morning classes. The ESL students and teachers hold holiday parties, go on outings and picnics, and do other fun things together. Pray today for the students that are attending these classes this semester and for the volunteers that are teaching each week.

Closing Prayer: When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse everything I know of you,
From Jordan depths to Hermon heights, including Mount Mizar. Chaos calls to chaos, to the tune of whitewater
rapids. Your breaking surf, your thundering breakers crash and crush me.
Then God promises to love me all day, sing songs all through the night! My life is God's prayer.

Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God, "Why did you let me down? Why am I walking around in tears, harassed
by enemies?" They're out for the kill, these tormentors with their obscenities, Taunting day after day, "Where is this
God of yours?"

Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul? Why are you crying the blues? Fix my eyes on God - soon I'll be
praising again. He puts a smile on my face. He's my God. (Psalm 42:6-11, *The Message*)

Notes.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Opening Prayer: O Lord my God, give me the same attitude this day as that of Christ Jesus, who emptied himself and made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. May I do the same. Amen.

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8

Journal: How is God calling you to empty yourself these days? How is that process going?

Reflection: If we are too full, there is no room within us to receive the beautiful and life-giving things that God longs to give. Therefore, we must empty ourselves. We must empty ourselves of anxiety and insecurity and fear. We must empty ourselves of opinion and agenda and demand. We must empty ourselves of all of our need. Ultimately, I suppose, we must empty ourselves of self. We must empty ourselves of entitlement and right and privilege, just like Jesus did. For only then will be totally open and completely surrendered to whatever God wants to do in and through us. And that is the path to life and love and wholeness.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Mark and Annemarie Dye](#) are passionate about building Christian leaders to mobilize and equip the African Church for mission in the world. Pray today for God's Spirit to work in and through those the Dyes are training in S. Africa and in Kenya.

The vision of the [Fellowship of Christian Athletes](#) (FCA) is to see the world impacted for Jesus Christ through the influence of athletes and coaches. Their mission is to present to athletes and coaches, and all whom they influence, the challenge and adventure of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, serving Him in their relationships and in the fellowship of the church. Pray today for all the FCA leaders and student athletes in Knoxville.

Closing Prayer: O Lord, forgive me that most days I am so full of myself that there is no room for you. Empty me, O God, of all that is not you, that I might be who you long for me to be and love the way you desire me to love. Amen.

Notes:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, you have created us, called us, chosen us to be your people. We wait now to receive your word of guidance and blessing. Grant unto us ears to hear, eyes to see, and faith to respond to your love and leadership. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (*A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants* by Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck)

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-10

Journal: What does it mean to you that you are chosen by God? How does that impact your life and faith?

Reflection: Still, I do believe deeply that, in order to live a spiritual life, we have to claim for ourselves that we are “taken” or “chosen.” Let me try to expand a bit on these words. When I know that I am chosen, I know that I have been seen as a special person. Someone has noticed me in my uniqueness and has expressed a desire to know me, to come closer to me, to love me. When I write to you that, as the Beloved, we are God’s chosen ones, I mean that we have been seen by God from all eternity and seen as unique, special, precious beings. It is very hard for me to express well the depth of meaning the word “chosen” has for me, but I hope you are willing to listen to me from within. From all eternity, long before your parents admired you or your friends acknowledged your gifts or your teachers, colleagues and employers encouraged you, you were already “chosen.” The eyes of love had seen you as precious, as of infinite beauty, as of eternal value. When love chooses, it chooses with a perfect sensitivity for the unique beauty of the chosen one, and it chooses without making anyone else feel excluded. (*Life of the Beloved* by Henri J. M. Nouwen)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Michael and Kim Essenburg](#) are serving at Okinawa Christian School (OCS), a school for missionary children and children of business and professional people in Okinawa, Japan. Pray today for God to use the parent Bible study that began this fall at OCSI to help parents better understand Biblical parenting.

[FISH](#) is a food distribution ministry which is sponsored by many churches and food banks in the Knoxville city area. CSPC stocks the food pantry once a year, takes calls for food, and also distributes the food once per month. Many of you served at FISH during last summer’s Come Serve With Us projects. Pray today about how you and your family can continue to help with FISH.

Closing Prayer: How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He’s the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son. - *The Message*

Notes:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Opening Prayer: Most holy and adorable Trinity, one God in three Persons, I believe that you are here present; I adore you with the deepest humility, and render to you, with my whole heart, the homage which is due to your sovereign majesty. O my God, I most humbly thank you for all the favors you have bestowed upon me to the present moment. I give you thanks from the depth of my heart that you have created me after your own image and likeness, that you have redeemed me by the precious blood of your dear Son, and that you have preserved me and brought me safe to the beginning of another day. I offer to you, O Lord, my whole being, and in particular all my thoughts, words, actions and sufferings of this day. I consecrate them all to the glory of your name, beseeching you that through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Savior, they may all find acceptance in your sight. May your divine love animate them, and may they all tend to your greater glory. - *A Morning Prayer to the Trinity*

Scripture: John 17:20-23

Journal: How do you feel about this prayer that Jesus prays for you? How is it playing out in your life? How is the Trinity a model for the life God desires for us and among us?

Reflection: Out of the overflow of Divine Love we were dreamt into being, in order that we might participate in the intimacy and affection of the Trinity. In the words of Paul Marechal: "The Trinity is a round dance in which Love flames forth from one Person to the Other in a flow that never ceases. The Father is One and his Dance is Three: Love flaming out of the Silence of the Secret One, and returning to Abba in one concurrent, timeless motion - in the embrace of the Spirit." This is the life Jesus is praying for in and among us, a life of intimate union with God and with one another. Why would we settle for anything less? It is by seeing and tasting this life within and among us that people will believe. As we dance with God, and dance with each other, the world around us will be drawn into this intimate, beautiful mystery.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

Bill Harding is currently a special representative for SIM in North America. God is using Bill's gifts and rich experience in Ethiopia as a conference speaker to challenge and reaffirm the priority of world missions. Pray today for a successful start for new missionaries with SIM that are going to some of the least reached populations of the world.

FOCUS (Following Our Choices Unto Success) works in the Knox County Jail and Detention Facility, Taft Youth Center, and the four men's prisons of East Tennessee. The FOCUS work "Behind the Walls" includes evangelistic events, weekly support groups, discipleship classes, life-skills classes and one-on-one counseling. Pray today for each person in these facilities that they may be open to the gospel when it is presented by FOCUS.

Closing Prayer: Enable me today, O God, to join the Divine Dance of the Trinity. Amen.

Notes.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Opening Prayer: Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. (Psalm 107:1-3, *ESV*)

Scripture: Psalm 107:1-43

Journal: What is your story with God these days? What is God up to deep within you?

Reflection: *"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story. . ."* (Psalm 107:2, *The Message*)

All prayer is prayed in a story, by someone who is in the story. - *Eugene Peterson*

"They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven." (Psalm 107:30)

Somehow it seems like I am always able to find my story in the stories of Psalm 107. In this case, God allowed me to take a step back and look at the story of the past six years. That's right, it has been six years since this particular leg of our journey began. At this time, six years ago, we were in the midst of a huge transition from 18 wonderful years on the Young Life staff, to the next thing (whatever it may be). In the midst of the turmoil and uncertainty of those days, I could never have imagined the beautiful work that God was doing at the time. Now, six years later, it is much easier to see. And to tell you the truth, when I think about it, it's really overwhelming. I cannot imagine being in a place that is a better expression of how God has wired me and who he has made me to be. The things I get to do and the people I have the privilege of being with are so incredible. I even have the wonderful privilege of still getting to do a lot of things with Young Life; things that I wouldn't have had time and space to do in my old role. Pretty amazing.

As I think back on it all, I probably would not choose to go through that painful process again, but I would definitely not trade the destination. Isn't that the way it so often is in this life? What a lesson; one that we all know by heart. The very best things that God does within us, often come from the times that were most difficult for us. Psalm 107 is exhibit A. I can think of no better words to describe life for us these days than, *"He guided them to their desired haven."* Indeed he has! And we are so grateful! Grateful to him, and grateful for you and the role each and every one of you has played in that process over the past six years. Here's to the next six! God definitely knows what he is doing. Thanks be to him! *"Let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men."* (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31)

Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord." (Psalm 107:43)

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

[Bruce and Laura Harris](#) have been running SEND International's camp and conference ministry in the mountains of western Tokyo for many years. The Harrises are returning to church planting in 2018. They are now in the U.S. on home assignment to prepare for this new ministry. Pray today for development of their mission's church planting initiative in the greater Tokyo area. This involves building a team, working alongside Japanese churches and building a prayer base of believers on both sides of the ocean as well as raising necessary financial support.

[Free Medical Clinic of America](#) was founded by CSPC member, Dr. Tom Kim, to provide medical care for the working uninsured. The clinic is built upon the words from Christ about serving the least, the lonely, and the lost. Pray for Dr. Kim and the other medical volunteers that help to meet the medical needs of our community.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, O God, for the ways you lead and guide. The process, at times, can be really painful, but the destination is always oh so good. Amen.

Notes:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Opening Prayer: Grant, O Infinite God, that I may ever cling fast to Jesus Christ, my Lord. Let His heart reveal to me how You are disposed toward me. I shall look upon His heart when I desire to know who You are. The eye of my mind is blinded whenever it looks only at Your Infinity, in which You are totally present in each and every aspect at once. Then I am surrounded by the darkness of Your unboundedness, which is harsher than all my earthly night. But instead I shall gaze upon His human heart, O God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then I shall be sure that You love me. (*Prayers For A Lifetime* by Karl Rahner)

Scripture: Romans 12:14

Journal: What does it mean to you that you are *blessed* by God? How does that affect your life? Are the words that come out of your mouth each day more *blessings* or *curses*? Why? What does it mean to *bless and do not curse*? How will you do that today? How will you offer words of life and blessing? To whom?

Reflection: To *bless*, in Latin (*benedicere*), means “to speak well of.” Therefore, to live a life of *blessing* means to allow the voice of God to speak deeply to our hearts and souls, to receive those words of *blessing* in the depths of our being, and then to be a *blessing* to (or to *bless*) those who come across our paths. That is the way this life is supposed to work. We are blessed in order to be a blessing. But in our haste to be a blessing, we cannot fail to listen deeply and to fully receive the words of life and blessing for ourselves. Otherwise, we will never have anything of depth and substance - and even authenticity - to pass along.

If I do not, first, truly believe that I am God’s beloved, then I will never be able to give words of life and blessing to those in my world who so desperately need it. I will be far too needy myself. And when I am needy, I cannot truly give anything of value because I am so anxiously trying to grasp some sort of blessing for myself. The life of love and compassion has turned into one of comparison and competition. And in that case, I cannot bless, I can only curse. And clearly, I am told by Paul - even with my enemies - to bless and do not curse.

O God, help me to be so convinced of my worth and value in your eyes, that I am able to freely and lovingly bless those in my life and world - both friend and enemy - rather than curse.

Prayer for the church, for others, for myself

Steve Hoke works with national church denominations and mission organizations in 25 countries and North America in the area of leader development and strategic life coaching. Pray today for the dozens of gifted and passionate men and women that CRM needs to lead mission teams to catalyze and launch disciple making movements in difficult places of the world. Pray also for reduced pain for Eloise who fractured a vertebra in a fall in late August. She is hoping to begin physical therapy.

The Garbage City Alliance is a ministry to the Garbage City in Cairo, Egypt. Rebecca Atollah, the wife of Ramez Atollah, the leader of the Bible Society of Egypt, is a key worker at the St. Simon Coptic Orthodox Church in the Mokattam garbage village. Over the last 25+ years she has helped with church planting and providing Christian education among the lowest of the low, Egypt’s untouchables. Pray today for Rebecca and her work with the Garbage City Alliance.

Closing Prayer: O Lord Jesus, you have blessed us in order that we might be a blessing. Never let us forget that. Amen.

Notes: