



**CONNECTING WITH GOD**  
HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S TRANSFORMING PRESENCE

A SERMON-BASED SMALL GROUP STUDY

**A SMALL  
GROUP STUDY  
~FOR~  
WINTER 2021**

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# INTRODUCTION

*“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5*

We were created to be loved by God and to live in a relationship of fruitful union with Him. He is the source of Abundant Life, and as we stay connected to Him, His life transforms and reorients us so that our character is changed and we experience true peace, joy, and life.

There are two reasons this study is being written, one immediate and the other ultimate. The immediate reason is that in this past year of Covid, many of our typical ways of connecting to God have been disrupted. For example, we haven’t been able to meet corporately for public worship and teaching. In no way do I wish to diminish the importance of these practices—they are very important for our growth. At the same time, though, this season of isolation has given us an opportunity to develop and strengthen personal practices that are really meant to infuse corporate gathering at all times. No matter our circumstances, we are able to practice tried and true ways of connecting with God and experiencing His transforming presence.

That leads to the ultimate reason for writing this study. Connecting to God leads to the experience of personal transformation and abundant life. It also leads to a proper understanding and use of the corporate disciplines we often rely so heavily upon. Put simply, no matter what is going on in the world around us, we are meant to experience the transformation of our hearts and the depth of abundant life as we stay connected with God.

The central conviction of this study is that a relationship with God is inherently transformational. His presence always blesses and changes us. As we seek to stay connected with Him, we will experience His transforming presence. It is, at one and the same time, both simple and difficult. It is simple because all we need to

do is engage in those practices that keep us connected to God. It is difficult because we are not naturally good at it and it will always require effort on our part.

Just as you don't learn to play piano by reading a book, but by dedication and practice, so we learn the practices of connecting with God by dedication and practice. We may experience frustration or find some spiritual disciplines more difficult than others. But as we take on these practices, we will learn and grow in our ability to stay connected with God.

As you engage in this study, be aware that this is not meant to be merely head knowledge. The whole point of taking on these practices is to try things! Experiment with them and be patient with them. You don't learn how to play piano overnight!

While there is much more that can and should be said about this subject, this study will explore some of the basic practices that keep us connected with God. For those who wish to go deeper—which I highly recommend—there are resources at the end of this study for further learning.

## Week One: Connecting

“Spiritual practices are too hard. Maybe they work for other people, but they must be more ‘spiritual’ than I am.”

“I’m happy with my spiritual life the way it is.”

“I’m too busy to try new things when it comes to disciplines or practices.”

These are some common reactions I’ve run into with regard to practices of connecting with God

Scripture, though, seems to hold out the reality that engaging in disciplines to connect to God are both **within the reach of all disciples** of Jesus and **is expected of all Jesus’ followers**. That doesn’t mean spiritual practices are always easy, but like so many other things in life, they can be learned if we are willing to put in the work. And they really are worth it! The abundant life that all of us truly yearn for is within reach!



### Getting Started

1. Would you rather have only winter or only summer for the rest of your life?
2. How do you feel about the possibility of experiencing God’s transforming presence?

3. The sermon noted what kills our connection with God. What was it? How does it both cut us off from God and produce false fruit in our lives?



## **Into the Bible**

In our age, we tend to look for “five easy steps” or “self-help” tips to bring about abundant life in Christ. This desire for manageable and foolproof strategies is a reflection of our consumeristic society, turning everything into a commodity to be had on demand. So when Jesus offers abundant life, we want to know what we must do in order to acquire it.

The ancient world would not have heard the invitation that way. The Old Testament vision of the abundant life was clearly linked with a life of obedience, wisdom, righteousness and justice. In other words, abundant life was living into everything God meant humanity to be. It wasn't about fulfilling my desires as much as it was coming into line with God's desires. However, the more our desires come into line with God's, the more fulfillment we experience.

This should come as no surprise, for it is God who created us. He knows how we were made and how our lives were meant to be lived.

*Read Matthew 11:25-30.*

Jesus is reacting to the religious leaders of His day, leaders who claimed to know God and God's ways, to be “wise and understanding.” It is clear that in Jesus' eyes, they are only wise in their own eyes. He is not, then, speaking against those who seek wisdom and understanding, but against those who pridefully think they do not need to be taught. Only those who are willing to be taught are able to receive Jesus' teaching.

4. Why do you think Jesus chooses “little children” to describe those who recognize God’s revelation? What is it that makes them capable of comprehending the things of God?
  
5. Read verse 27 slowly and carefully. What astonishing claim is Jesus making for Himself? What does it mean for this to be true?

The religion of the Pharisees was a heavy burden for those who sought to follow God in that way. It was a religion of rules to be kept in our own strength, motivated by fear of punishment by a God who kept score of human behaviors. It was external in the sense that it wasn’t about the heart, but about outward action. The ever-present danger of externalized religion is that it leads to either pride (I can do it) or anguish (I can’t do it), and a judgmental attitude toward others when we hold them to the same external standard.

To those who are well-acquainted with the heaviness of this way of life, or simply with the heaviness of life itself, Jesus’ invitation is refreshing breeze of hope: there can be another way.

6. What is Jesus’ promise to us? In practical and biblical terms, what does that mean?

7. What things do we need to do to receive this promise?

Jesus is inviting us to a life of “rest” by being obedient to Him. The “yoke” described a commitment to a life of obedience to the Law of Moses. As we commit to a life of obedience to Jesus, we will find abundant life. To what, though, are we to be obedient?

### **Going Deeper**

So often we think only of commandments: do’s and don’ts. While there are certainly things that we should and should not do, Jesus’ directions go deeper. We are not only to learn what Jesus wants us to do, but to live as Jesus lives: in surrendered, trusting obedience to His Heavenly Father.

8. To wear a yoke is to walk in tandem with another. How is Jesus’ yoke an invitation to enter into His “way of life?” How is that different, and more, than mere external obedience to rules?
9. How do we learn the “way of life” of another person? How do we learn Jesus’ “way of life?”



### **Connection Practice**

In order to experience God’s transforming presence, we first need to believe that His presence is real and accessible. This week,

spend time every day with a “centering prayer.” These are prayers that rehearse biblical truths in a way that allows them to sink into our being. Here’s one way to do it:

- Find a place where distractions are minimal. It can be a quiet room, outdoors, in a favorite chair.
- Sit comfortably and spend a few moments just breathing deeply.
- Repeat a centering phrase. A few are:
  - God, your presence fills the universe, your presence fills this place.
  - God, you are closer to me than my own breath.
  - Jesus, Son of God, Savior, have mercy on me.
  - God, you are everywhere, you are all around me.



“The man who is wise, therefore, will see his life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water till it is filled, then discharges the overflow without loss to itself ... Today there are many in the Church who act like canals, the reservoirs are far too rare ... You too must learn to await this fullness before pouring out your gifts, do not try to be more generous than God.”

— Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs

## Week Two: Solitude and Silence

In order to connect with God, we need to cultivate the ability to *open ourselves to His presence*. I choose that language intentionally. We don't need to "go" to God's presence. We don't need God to "show up." God is always with us, indeed, within us, by His Holy Spirit. But even though He is always present, we still need to learn how to be open to, or to recognize, His presence.

Solitude is that place where we can go to be alone with the Lord. That inner place where the noise of our lives and the noise of this world fall away and we can be present with and attentive to our precious Savior.

This is perhaps one of the hardest things we will ever learn how to do. We live in a culture that glories in being busy and loud. We have a hard time sitting still. Frankly, I think Henri Nouwen was right when he wrote that we run from silence and solitude because when we enter into it, we become aware of the storm that is brewing inside. It is easier to stay distracted, busy and noisy, than to attend to the fray inside.

But if we are ever to connect with God, we must learn solitude and silence. They are not only disciplines in themselves, but they are indispensable to all the other practices we will take on in our connecting with God.



### Getting Started

1. Did you try any "centering prayer" last week? If so, what did you notice or learn from it?
2. The sermon talked about the difference between solitude and loneliness. What is the difference? How is it an important distinction?



As Jesus was approaching Jerusalem and His impending death, He took some time away with three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John. According to Tradition, they went up Mount

*Mount Tabor, traditional site of the Transfiguration.* Tabor, 11 miles west of the Sea of Galilee in the north of Israel. By seeking space and time away, Jesus was practicing solitude.

*Read Matthew 17:1-8*

3. Why do you think Jesus sought physical solitude with the Father at this point in His ministry? Why do you think He sought physical solitude away from other people at this point in His ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How did Peter fail to exercise the practice of silence at this time? While it is pure conjecture, what do you think the scene could have looked like if Peter had chosen to measure his words?

5. When Peter stopped speaking (by the Father’s interruption), how did his awareness of the Father’s presence impact him?

As the scene comes to a close, these three disciples have moved into a place of silence and solitude. Jesus bid them “have no fear” and when they lifted their eyes, “they saw no one but Jesus only.” They are alone now with Jesus.

### **Going Deeper**

6. How is Jesus strengthened by this time of solitude on the Mount of Transfiguration?
7. Compare Peter before and after he enters into silence and solitude. How was his experience and knowledge of Jesus changed? His obedience?



### **Connection Practice**

Entering into silence and solitude is a muscle of faith to be developed. At first, it can be daunting, even frightening, to enter into this spiritual space because there is so much noise inside. Many people, upon tasting of quiet, will run as fast as they can to distractions and noise. Others, finding it difficult to enter a quiet space inside, will grow frustrated and be tempted to give up. But with patience and perseverance, we can strengthen that muscle of faith that will allow us to enter into that space of “seeing Jesus only” no matter what is going on around us.

This week, try to make use of what Richard Foster calls “little solitudes” that already exist in our day. For example, that first cup of coffee in the quiet of the morning is a wonderful time to seek silence and solitude. Or perhaps it is at the end of the day when all is “put to bed” and you have a moment to exhale and give thanks to God for the day that has past.

If you are feeling a bit more adventurous, try times of intentional silence. Perhaps set aside an afternoon to truly be silent and not speak. Maybe choose a day to go silent on social media. Practice not getting the “last word.” Note how you feel and what is going on inside of you. Note what God is revealing to you.

## Week Three: Prayer

Martin Luther once wrote, “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.” My hunch is that doesn’t ring true to the experience of most. Often, at best, we squeeze prayer in, and usually don’t feel that our life of prayer is a lifeline that is indispensable to our lives. It shouldn’t be that way. It doesn’t need to be.

Prayer, wrote St. Augustine, is “nothing but love.” It is seeking the God we love. It is being in the presence of the One we love. It is loving Him and being bathed in His love. This kind of prayer changes us and changes things around us. This kind of prayer changes everything.

But, like any other practice, while it is simple, it isn’t easy. Our natural disposition is to rely upon ourselves and to be distracted. That’s why learning silence and solitude are such an aid to prayer. When we can find that place of “seeing only Jesus,” prayer flows more easily. And when we find it, “we allow ourselves,” Richard Foster writes, “to be gathered up into the arms of the Father and let him sing his love song over us.” (*Prayer*, p. 3-4).

### Getting Started

1. Did you try any practices of silence and solitude last week? If so, what did you notice or learn?
  
2. The sermon talked about our “Father in the heavenlies.” What is this truth and how does it change our experience of prayer?



## Into the Bible

In the sermon, we examined the content of the Lord's Prayer. In our study, we will unpack some of Jesus' teaching surrounding the same prayer.

Our motivations matter. While there are a lot of different motivations behind why we pray and none of us ever has entirely pure motives in prayer, there is a general trajectory to our motivations. Either we are praying to stay connected to God, or connected to self.

*Read Matthew 6:5-8*

3. Jesus first notes how the “hypocrites” pray. What motivates their prayers? To whom are they actually praying?
  
4. Jesus next notes how the “Gentiles” pray. What is motivating their prayers?

What we really *want* determines *how* we pray. Our words can sound just fine; in fact, they can sound profound and eloquent, but if the motive behind them is not aimed in the right direction, they have no power.

Tim Keller has identified four of the great idols of our age as:

- Power – being able to force my will on others.
- Control – being able to keep everything going according to my plans.



## **Going Deeper**

8. Can you identify how any idols may be working themselves out in your own life of prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How is your vision of God is working itself out in your life of prayer?



## **Connection Practice**

This week, try praying the Lord’s Prayer in light of the teaching of the sermon and this study. Start with centering prayer (week one) as you open yourself to the presence of your “Father in the heavenlies.” Reflect upon what it means for God to be your Father. Slowly fill in the phrases with further content. For example, add detail to your “daily bread” or confess “trespasses” where false motivations, idols, or a skewed vision of God have impacted your relationship with Him.

## Week Four: Study

There has been a progression in our exploration of *Connecting With God*. None of these practices is meant to stand alone. They all work together and inform one another.

Without the truth, we run the risk of making God who we want Him to be, rather than actually knowing Him for who He is. We cannot love God without the truth of who He is, otherwise we are simply loving a being of our own creation. Truth and love cannot be separated. We cannot love anyone without knowing who they truly are.

Study is an analytical practice in which we carefully examine something in order to understand it. Proper study is not just the accumulation of information; it is the pursuit of knowledge that leads us into abundant life. Of all of our practices, this is perhaps the most straightforward and methodical, and perhaps the most critical, for it will ensure that all our other practices do not wander into error.



### Getting Started

1. Did you try the Connection Practice last week? If so, what did you notice or learn?
  
2. The Sermon spoke of the goal of study. What is it? How does that differ from merely accumulating information?



## Into the Bible

This week, we will walk through the four steps of study. These steps are true for the study of *anything*, including the Bible.

### Step One: Repetition

Repetition and memorization are not exciting, but they are indispensable and necessary in study. You can't really understand something if you can't remember what it is. Not only that, repetition is powerful on its own. As we repeat truths to ourselves, they slowly take root in our minds and hearts and have the power to actually change how we perceive something.

### Step Two: Concentration

We need to focus on what we are studying. In a distracted culture like ours, this can be difficult. Most people will need to turn off the TV or radio and get away from devices. It is good to consider using a physical space that is free from distraction. For example, don't study in the kitchen if the refrigerator captivates your attention. For some, the physical space isn't as important as silence. For others, silence is more distracting than wearing headphones that drown out all the distracting sounds around. Experiment with what allows you to focus.

You may also want to consider reading out loud. Not only is oral recitation helpful in memorization, but it can help with focus.

### Step Three: Comprehension

The point of comprehension is to understand the subject. What does the author mean? The goal is not to respond, but simply to grasp what is being said. In communication terms, this is the act of listening. We want to be able to faithfully restate what was said in a way that is true to the author's intention.

This will require careful reading. Slowing down and taking note of what is being said and not jumping either to what we want it to mean or to what use it is to us.

It is also best to read in the community of the Church. We certainly read the Bible on our own, but we also tend to learn much more when we wrestle together with Scripture. We can also read with the community of gifted scholars who can help us understand the context and details of the passage being studied. Not all scholars fall within the realm of orthodoxy, though, so it is always good to consult your pastor to find resources that fall within the historic teaching of the Church through the ages.

#### Step Four: Reflection

Once we have comprehended what is being studied, we are ready to reflect upon its significance for ourselves and our situation. This is where most people want to jump, but it can only rightly come as the final step.

Let's try implementing all four steps:

*Read Psalm 23* at least five times, preferably aloud, in a way that allows you to focus.

3. What is the overall point of the psalm?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. There is a shift in the psalm from “he” to “you.” Where is it, and what difference does that shift make?

While there is much more to be explored here, there are some basic points of context that greatly enhance this psalm. First, King David, the author, was a shepherd before becoming king. The life

of a shepherd was rough. They weren't the meek and mild type – they were tough and willing to stand between the sheep and predators. They spent days and nights in the open, protecting and rescuing their livestock. Without a shepherd's strength and care, sheep do not thrive.



*Prone to flash floods, these types of passages were dangerous.*

Even after being anointed king to replace King Saul, David spent years on the run for his life as Saul hunted him down to kill him. Often hiding in the hills of Judah, he would literally be acquainted with the “valley of the shadow of death,” which, according to scholar Kenneth Bailey, would be a narrow ravine prone to flash flooding, and hence very dangerous. To walk through one of these tight passages was to be completely vulnerable and virtually defenseless.

5. How do these facts inform the meaning of the psalm?

One of the most important words in the Old Testament is *hesed*, typically translated as “steadfast love.” It expresses God’s faithful covenant love for His people. Like the love of marriage, it is a love that will never leave or forsake. In fact, one of the greatest images for *hesed* in the Old Testament is the book of Ruth. Her faithful love for her mother-in-law Naomi and the love Boaz shows for her are both a reflection of God’s *hesed* for us. Perhaps it shouldn’t surprise us that Ruth was David’s great-grandmother!

6. What does David mean by saying God’s *hesed* “shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever?”

## Going Deeper

Now it is time to reflect more deeply upon the psalm. David's understanding of God's *hesed* for him allowed him to trust in God despite the very real danger in his world. Not only that, David was able to see God's goodness in his life even in the midst of the trials.

7. How is what David means speaking to you in your life right now?
  
8. What might you need to do to cultivate a deeper knowledge of God's steadfast love for you?



## Connection Practice

This week, build upon your study of Psalm 23. If there is a place where you need to more deeply understand or trust God's steadfast love for you, allow this psalm to wash over you. Thinking about what David meant by calling the Lord his shepherd, try using "the Lord is my Shepherd" as a centering prayer. As you enter into a time of solitude and silence, slowly pray this psalm out loud and allow it to give voice to where it is speaking into your life right now.

## Week Five: Meditation

The Bible uses two different Hebrew words to describe the practice of meditation, and uses them together some fifty eight times to describe activities from meditating upon God's Word to reflecting upon the Law to rehearsing God's works. In each case, the point is that encountering God changes one's behavior. *Meditation leads to repentance and obedience.*

The purpose of meditation is to develop a deeper friendship with Jesus as we spend time seek to grow in our knowledge of Him and His ways.

Many people, upon being invited to meditate, will shy away from it. Either they see it as too difficult or too strange and impractical. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Meditation is commended by Scripture and by the witness of God's people through the ages. It does not always lead to mystical experiences (although it can), but more often opens us to hearing God's voice in such a way that we discern rather mundane and practical things.



### Getting Started

1. Did you engage the practice of praying Psalm 23? If so, what did you notice or learn?
2. The sermon discussed two big categories of Christian meditation. What were they? How do you feel about practicing them?



## Into the Bible

Psalm 19 was CS Lewis' favorite psalm. It starts with a meditation upon creation that leads to a meditation upon the Law. As we engage this study, we will be bringing together all of our practices from this series.

*Read Psalm 19.*

3. "The heavens declare the glory of God." What biblical theological knowledge does David draw upon in making such a profound statement?

Verse 6 provides the hinge of the psalm. Just as nothing is hidden from the light of the sun, so nothing is hidden from the insight of the Law.

4. In verses 7-11, how does David characterize the Law itself? The benefit of the Law?
5. In verses 12-14, David engages in *Reflection*. As he reflects upon God's perfect Law, what does he recognize about himself? What does he ask of the Lord?

6. Verse 14 is a powerful statement regarding our human failing and need. How does David's prayer mirror Jesus' statement that "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How do we see solitude, study, and prayer come together in this Psalm?

### **Going Deeper**

8. Do you see God's glory in creation? In what ways?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Do you "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" God's Word in a way that makes it part of your very being?

### **Connection Practice**

This week, try spending time in meditation upon God's creation. Set aside ten to fifteen minutes to simply sit outside. We will meditate in two stages.

*In the first stage, we will use our surroundings to center ourselves in God's presence:*

Sit comfortably (so as not to be distracted).

Breathe deeply and rhythmically.

Use a “centering prayer” to open yourself to God’s presence.

Pay attention. Pay attention to how you feel (tense, relaxed, pain, scattered, etc.). Pay attention to the sounds around you (birds, wind, cars, leaf blowers). It doesn’t matter what it is you hear, just allow yourself to be present to it. This action allows you to focus and to “be still” as you become aware of everything going on in and around you.

Rest here for a while as you thankfully sit in God’s presence. You don’t need to speak. If your thoughts wander, don’t scold yourself or “try harder” to focus, just return your concentration back to the Lord. This is a reminder of how much you need Him.

*In the second stage, we will engage in practices. Try one of the following:*

 Recollect Psalm 23. Imagine yourself in the Judean wilderness with David. Imagine the sounds and smells and sights there. Imagine that you are David. Take your own life situation into the psalm and pray through what it means for the Lord to be your Shepherd. Imagine what it would look like to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

 Choose something in your surroundings to focus on. Perhaps a tree, flowers, bees, birds, pets. Observe them carefully and deeply. You will likely become aware of how little you normally notice of things. You may notice knots on the tree trunk, dead leaves, or strange branches. Just keep noticing. After spending time noticing (give it at least five minutes), ask God to speak to you through it. Don’t expect a thundering voice or a profound insight. It could be as simple as “I need to do a better job trimming my trees so they are healthier.” That could lead, though, to “I need to

allow my heavenly Gardener to prune me so that I produce better fruit” (John 15).

Here’s an example. Many years ago I was on a hike with youth in Morro Bay. As we went up a hill to get a gorgeous view of the surroundings, I noticed hawks riding thermals higher and higher. I also noticed other birds flying vigorously through the air. As I watched, a small voice inside noted that Jesus’ “yoke is easy.” When we walk with Jesus in the power of the Spirit, it is like riding a thermal: He carries us higher and higher into His love and purposes. But when we don’t, the work becomes much harder. We still have the work of “staying in the thermal,” but the real power comes from Him.

That is the work of *Connecting With God*. As we keep ourselves connected to Him through intentional practices, we find that life becomes something better, something abundant. We find that no matter what is going on inside or around us, that we are centered, we are at rest and peace. And we find that we produce the fruit of that same rest and peace. We find that we are transformed both inside and out.

## FOR FURTHER READING

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# Compline

## *The Officiant begins*

Our help is in the Name of the Lord;  
*People* The maker of heaven and earth.

## *The Officiant continues*

Let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

## *Silence may be kept. The Officiant and People then say*

Almighty God and Father, we confess to you,  
to one another, and to the whole company of heaven,  
that we have sinned, through our own fault,  
in thought, and word, and deed,  
and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,  
have mercy upon us, forgive us all our sins,  
and by the power of your Holy Spirit  
raise us up to serve you in newness of life,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

## *The Officiant alone says*

May Almighty God grant us forgiveness of our sins,  
and the grace and comfort of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

*Officiant* O God, make speed to save us.

*People* O Lord, make haste to help us.

*Officiant* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

*People* as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.

*Except in Lent, add Alleluia.*

*One or more of the following Psalms are sung or said.*

**Psalm 4** *Cum invocarem*

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause; \*  
you set me free when I am hard-pressed;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 “You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory? \*  
how long will you worship dumb idols  
and run after false gods?”
- 3 Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful; \*  
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.
- 4 Tremble, then, and do not sin; \*  
Speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.
- 5 Offer the appointed sacrifices \*  
and put your trust in the Lord.
- 6 Many are saying,  
“Oh, that we might see better times!” \*  
Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.
- 7 You have put gladness in my heart, \*  
more than when grain and wine and oil increase.
- 8 I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep; \*  
for only you, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

**Psalm 31:1-5** *In te, Domine, speravi*

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame: \*  
deliver me in your righteousness.
- 2 Incline your ear to me; \*

make haste to deliver me.

3 Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,  
for you are my crag and my stronghold; \*  
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.

4 Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, \*  
for you are my tower of strength.

5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, \*  
for you have redeemed me,  
O Lord, O God of truth.

### **Psalm 91** Qui habitat

1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High \*  
abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 He shall say to the Lord,  
“You are my refuge and my stronghold, \*  
my God in whom I put my trust.”

3 He shall deliver you from the snare of the hunter \*  
and from the deadly pestilence.

4 He shall cover you with his pinions,  
and you shall find refuge under his wings; \*  
his faithfulness shall be a shield and buckler.

5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, \*  
nor of the arrow that flies by day;

6 Of the plague that stalks in the darkness, \*  
nor of the sickness that lays waste at mid-day.

7 A thousand shall fall at your side  
and ten thousand at your right hand, \*  
but it shall not come near you.

8 Your eyes have only to behold \*

to see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge, \*  
and the Most High your habitation,

10 There shall no evil happen to you, \*  
neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over you, \*  
to keep you in all your ways.

12 They shall bear you in their hands, \*  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

13 You shall tread upon the lion and adder; \*  
you shall trample the young lion and the serpent  
under your feet.

14 Because he is bound to me in love,  
therefore will I deliver him; \*  
I will protect him, because he knows my Name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; \*  
I am with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and bring him to honor.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, \*  
and show him my salvation.

**Psalm 134** *Ecce nunc*

1 Behold now, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, \*  
you that stand by night in the house of the Lord.

2 Lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the Lord; \*  
the Lord who made heaven and earth bless you out of Zion.

*At the end of the Psalms is sung or said*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,



of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Look down, O Lord, from your heavenly throne, illumine this night with your celestial brightness, and from the children of light banish the deeds of darkness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Collect for Saturdays

We give you thanks, O God, for revealing your Son Jesus Christ to us by the light of his resurrection: Grant that as we sing your glory at the close of this day, our joy may abound in the morning as we celebrate the Paschal mystery; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*One of the following prayers may be added*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen.*

*or this*

O God, your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those, both night and day, who work while others sleep, and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

***Prayer requests and free intercessions and thanksgivings may be offered.***

*If time permits, the Officiant and People say or sing the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32) with this Antiphon*

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake

we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.  
Lord, now let your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared before the face of all people;  
to be a light to lighten the Gentiles,  
and to be the glory of your people Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world  
without end. Amen.

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake  
we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

*In Easter Season, add* Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Officiant* Let us bless the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*The Officiant concludes with the following*

The Lord Almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end.  
*Amen.*

*Or this*

The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless us and keep us, this night and evermore. *Amen.*

# PRAYER REQUESTS



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 TrinityAnglicanBakersfield

Sunday Worship

8 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

11300 Campus Park Dr.