



# **VISION QUEST**

**DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL FOR THE  
*FLIP MY CHURCH PRAYER SERIES*  
FOR CONGREGATIONS DISCERNING  
*WHAT GOD IS CALLING THEM TO DO***

This *PRAYER JOURNAL/GUIDE* belongs to:

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## LOOKING FORWARD....

On the following pages you will find an opportunity to join with others in your congregation to explore the question, “What is GOD calling us to do?”

We can adequately answer this question only after we uncover, some would say *recover*, the reason GOD planted our congregation where HE did in the first place ... after we uncover GOD’s original purpose for this particular congregation in which you now find ourselves.

Once we recover *WHY* we exist, we have to consider “*WHO*” we are. Congregations discover their *WHO* by looking at the social, racial, ethnic, age, economic, etc. composition of their congregation and their community. Who besides ourselves call our congregation “HOME?” Whom has GOD brought together with us to be the BODY OF CHRIST? Who are our neighbors, those who live and work near our congregation ... who might one day be part of this congregation, or at least join with us in mission?

After we recover *WHY* we are and discover *WHO* we are, we can move on to discover *WHAT* GOD is calling us to do ... *WHAT* GOD’s *Vision* is for our congregation! *WHAT* does GOD want our congregation to do with and for those inside and outside the walls of the building we call “church?” *WHAT* are we meant to do as together we live-out GOD’s purpose in this day, time, place? *WHAT* does GOD need us to do on *HIS* behalf?

Over the next thirteen weeks, we’re going to work on that question together as a congregation, relying on the only way we know to “hear” GOD: through prayer, Scripture, and conversation. While this *Devotional Journal* is written to be used individually, we want to encourage you to meet with at least one other person once a week to share your questions, concerns, comments, celebrations, and insights (this is the “conversation” part). Maybe you and your prayer partner can join with other prayer partners (or with those who don’t have a prayer partner!) on Sundays or at another time during the week to encourage one another as together we wonder and wander ... as we quest together for GOD’s *Vision* for this congregation.



# LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK ONE

As we engage this first week of our *VISION QUEST PRAYER SERIES*, we invite you to hold in mind two verses from the Bible. The first is from the Older Testament, written by a prophet named Jeremiah who lived over six hundred years before Jesus was born. Through Jeremiah, GOD said:

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon ME and come and pray to ME, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek ME and find ME when you seek ME with all your heart.

*Jeremiah 29.11-13*

Remember that GOD has plans for you and for our congregation and that those plans are meant to prosper, not harm, us ... no matter how difficult they may seem at times.

The second scripture is from the Bible's Newer Testament. There a man by the name of Paul (who wrote most of the letters we find in the Newer Testament) refers to the Church as the Body of Christ:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body ... and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

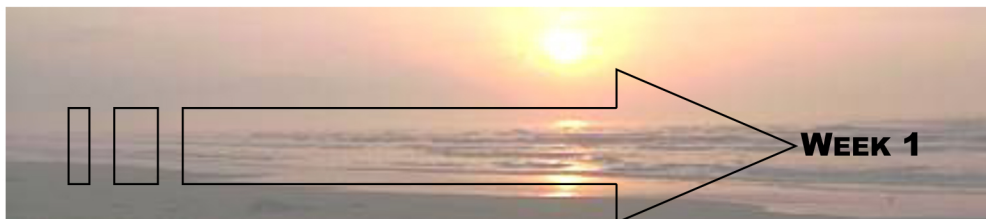


<sup>14</sup>Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.  
<sup>15</sup>If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.  
<sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But in fact GOD has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup>If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

*1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 12.12-20*

As we together engage this Quest of praying together as a congregation, there may be times you aren't sure about the prayers or the ways of praying, but we encourage you to keep questing: join a Prayer Group to ask questions and maybe share or try out what you've been learning. We also want you to remember that you are a very important part of this Body and that we need you....

Now, all that being said: let's quest forward together.



## MONDAY

Today we start a three-month Quest, a *PRAYER SERIES* that will culminate in an opportunity for each participant to share what we think GOD may be saying to us as a congregation.

You may be thinking, “WHAT!?!?! Are they crazy? GOD talking to me? GOD speaking? Even if GOD does talk to us today, how do we hear HIM? How could I possibly hear HIM? What on Earth would GOD have to say to me?”

Okay, okay.... Stop thinking for a minute and take a deep breath. Breathe in ... breathe out. Try it again, this time breathing in through your nose as you are able and out through your mouth: breathe in ... breathe out. Try breathing in to the count of five, pausing, and breathing out to the count of five.

Now, as you breathe in, think the Name, “Jesus.”

And as you breath out, think “Thank YOU.”

Try it again....

Breathe in: “Jesus....”

Breathe out: “Thank YOU....”

And again....

Breathe in through your nose as you’re able: “Jesus.”

Breathe out through your mouth as able: “Thank YOU.”

Jesus... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Whew-HOOOOOOOOO! You’re praying!

This is called a *Breath Prayer*. It can help us calm down and focus, anywhere and anytime. Being calm and focusing (what we’ll call *centering*) are keys for helping us “hear” GOD speak.

For today, keep breathing and praying.

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

# TUESDAY

What is your experience with prayer? Are you just beginning, or maybe only exploring at this point? Are you familiar with some of the written prayers many of us say in worship on Sundays? Do you pray prayers of your own? Are you a “prayer warrior?”

Perhaps a more important question about prayer is, “Do you think it matters or makes a difference?” To move us past the simplicity of a mere “yes” or “no” answer, let’s ask that question this way, “What difference does praying make?”

Below you’ll find a section called *Thoughts for and from Today*. You’ll find a bit of space each day to jot down your thoughts and observations from the day. Today we invite you to jot down your thoughts about the difference prayer makes. How do you answer that question: “What difference does praying make?”

When you’re done, practice yesterday’s Breath Prayer.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## **WEDNESDAY**

I'm wondering if we didn't get a little ahead of ourselves yesterday. Perhaps before we ask the question, "Does praying make a difference," we should ask, "Can you conceive what GOD can do?" There are a number of reasons people don't engage prayer. One of the common reasons is that we cannot begin to conceive what GOD is capable of doing.

The Bible begins with two accounts of Creation. GOD did not merely create Heaven and Earth and everything in and around them; GOD continues to create. And if you'll look at verses four through twenty-five in the second chapter of the Older Testament book of Genesis (Genesis 2.4-25), you'll find that GOD created humans with four relationships in mind: a relationship with Creation, a relationship with one another, a relationship with ourselves, and a relationship with GOD. From the very beginning, GOD has been talking to us ... and GOD doesn't want that to end!

So how and when to do you talk to GOD? How are your conversations going? When was the last time you asked GOD what HE wants to do in and through you? In and through our congregation? Can you believe GOD can do *anything*?

Practice your breath prayer again today and write your thoughts in the space below.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# THURSDAY

In one of Jesus' lessons about prayer, HE notes that just about anyone of us would get up in the middle of the night to give a neighbor a loaf of bread if that neighbor kept standing at our door "ringing the doorbell," so to speak. HE then says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; those who seek find; and to those who knock, the door will be opened" (see *Luke 11.5-13* in the Newer Testament of the Bible).

For what are you asking GOD? What are you looking for from GOD? What will you say to GOD when HE answers the door? What do you think GOD will say to you when you answer the door?

What holds you back from boldly asking GOD for something? If you know how boldly you can go and have been asking "big" from GOD, how might you share your experiences with someone who isn't so sure yet? What "GOD-incidences" might you share from your journey?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# FRIDAY

Are you getting a little tired of praying the Breath Prayer? You may be aware that different prayers work differently for different people. Some of us are *contemplatives* who enjoy sitting still and quietly communing with GOD. Some of us are *kinesthetic* and need to be up and moving when we pray; we're particularly fond of praying while we're walking or running (this would drive most contemplatives crazy). Others of us need to journal to get our thoughts out and some of us need prayer lists to help us remember what and for whom we need to be praying. As long as we're trying to communicate with GOD and build our relationship with HIM, there is no wrong way to pray.

But prayer doesn't seem to come naturally for most of us and it *is* easy to "get into a rut." Tomorrow we're going to explore a model that will help us move our prayers to a more "balanced place." For today, though, we want to remind you that praying makes a difference, that *your* prayers make a difference, and that GOD is open to your asking for anything. So, again we ask: if you could ask GOD for *anything*, what would it be? Will you write that prayer below? If not, then write below why not.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# SATURDAY

There are several mnemonic (*memory*) prayer devices around to help us keep our prayers balanced. A newer model is **P<sup>•</sup>R<sup>•</sup>A<sup>•</sup>Y**. As you might have guessed, each of the letters in **P<sup>•</sup>R<sup>•</sup>A<sup>•</sup>Y** represents an important part of prayer:

**PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING:** We *praise* GOD for WHO

GOD is *and* we *thank* HIM for what HE has done, is doing, and is going to do.

*“GOD, You are wonderfully awesome and I thank You for the way You provided for me today.”  
(be as specific as possible)*

**REPENTANCE:** We ask forgiveness for the ways we fall short of our potential (also called *confession*)

*“GOD, I wasn’t as patient as I could have been today. Please forgive me and give me rest and kindness to be more compassionate tomorrow.”*

**Ask:** We knock and seek for *ourselves* and others with the proviso, “GOD, YOUR will be done.”

*“GOD, You know the arguing that’s been going on at church. Help us to be more loving and give me the skills to listen and speak more clearly.”*

**Yes:** This is our commitment to do what GOD is asking us to do ... often with a prayer for strength and perseverance or endurance.

*“GOD, I’m not sure what You want from me but I’m YOURS and I want to serve You today. Use me. Help me. Please be gentle and direct with me. Thank You. Amen.”*

Now it’s your turn to try **P<sup>•</sup>R<sup>•</sup>A<sup>•</sup>Y** PRAY-ing. We’ll keep it short today. Start by writing your thoughts in the spaces below.

## A **P<sup>•</sup>R<sup>•</sup>A<sup>•</sup>Y** Prayer

**P** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

**A** \_\_\_\_\_

**Y** \_\_\_\_\_

## SUNDAY

We are going to use this Sunday space in our *DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL* as an opportunity to look back on the week that has been, a good exercise to prepare for the week ahead.

But first, let's relax for a moment and once again practice this week's Breath Prayer:

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Thank YOU, Jesus. Amen.

Use the spaces below to consider the following:

What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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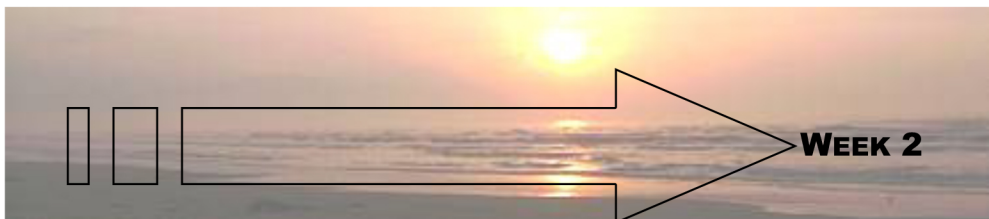
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# LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK TWO

This next week we're going to consider *perception*: the ways we perceive GOD. What does GOD's *voice* "sound" like? How can we "hear" GOD's *voice*? How do we know it's GOD's *voice* we're "hearing?" We will consider these questions and more in the week ahead. Hold on for this week of our Quest!

Jesus said, "I didn't make this up. What I teach comes from the ONE WHO sent ME. Anyone who wants to do HIS will can test this teaching and know whether it's from GOD or whether I'm making it up. A person making things up tries to make himself look good. But someone trying to honor the One who sent him sticks to the facts and doesn't tamper with reality.

*John 7.16-18* in *The Message* version of the Bible  
© 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson



# MONDAY

As we closed last week, we introduced the *P'R'A'Y PRAYER* as another model for praying. Today we're going to revisit it, inviting you to write a more complete *P'R'A'Y PRAYER*. It's important we have the basics of prayer—**P**raise and thanksgiving, **R**epentance, **A**sking, and **Y**es-sing—in place before we add the dynamic of listening to the mix. These help us remember that prayer isn't just about us or those we care about ... it is ultimately about our being in conversation with GOD.

## My P'R'A'Y Prayer for Today:

**P**

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**R**

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**A**

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**Y**

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# TUESDAY

As you may have noticed, praying the *P\*R\*A\*Y PRAYER* is a bit one-sided: we're the ones doing all the talking. But as we've already mentioned, prayer is like a telephone line on which both parties have the opportunity to speak. As such, we have to build listening into our prayer time and figure out how to "hear" GOD.

The truth is that very few of us audibly "hear" GOD speak to us. Far more of us hear GOD speak to us in a "still small voice" in our heads. Some of us have been discounting this voice as our own—as our "conscience"—but being conscious of what this voice says when, and how it says it, can help us differentiate between us and GOD. In fact, those of us who've been doing this for a while have come to realize that when "the voice" is speaking something amazingly brilliant or innovative, it is more than likely GOD's voice. On the other hand, if "the voice" ever directs you to do something dangerous or destructive, it is NOT GOD's voice (but we'll talk more about that in coming days).

One of the most basic tools for learning to hear GOD's voice is the *PRAYER CHART*:

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

In the first two columns you list your requests for GOD and the date you are making them; keep your list with you when praying so you can make a record of your requests. From time to time, perhaps weekly, read back through your requests with an eye for how GOD may have answered your prayers. This tool can help teach us how GOD responds to our requests, as well as how to pray more in line with how GOD responds to our requests.

*PRAYER CHART*-ing has also reminded many of us over the years that GOD is always faithful, even when HE seems to be ignoring one of our biggest requests or is answering much differently than we had hoped.

At the end of this week, you'll find a *PRAYER CHART* to get you started. As you offer your prayers during this *QUEST*, *chart* them here and see what GOD does with them!

## **WEDNESDAY**

Yesterday we talked about the “still small voice” of GOD. Some have called it an “inner leading.” In actuality, if you really want to hear GOD’s voice, it will probably be harder *not* to hear it than to hear GOD speaking. If you’ve already professed your faith in GOD and been baptized, you have more than likely heard GOD: it was the voice inside you that said something like, “Step forward” or “Come on, what’s holding you back?”

When it comes to listening, we wrestle with silencing the voices in our head in a way that GOD’s voice can come clearly through. Many have found the Breath Prayer to be helpful, gradually releasing the words so that you become conscious of only your breath and, eventually, GOD’s voice. If you find your own or others’ thoughts racing through your head, ask GOD to help silence them.

Another tool some have found helpful is *journaling*, writing down what you “hear.” This can also help you sort through discerning GOD’s voice and the voices of others, or yourself. This is particularly helpful over time when we combine it with the *PRAYER CHART*. Try hearing GOD today. Use the space below to help sift through your thoughts to what HE may be trying to say to you.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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## THURSDAY

As you may have experienced for yourself, GOD speaks to us in ways other than that still small voice.

GOD still speaks through HIS Word, the Bible. Verse 105 of Psalm 119 (*Psalm 119.105*) says that GOD's Word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." One of the reasons Scripture is called the "Living Word" is that we can read it one day and interpret it one way, "hear" it say one thing, and then hear something different or additional several days later. And then there are those days a particular verse or story seems to scream out at us. Perhaps you've wondered why.

GOD is also known to speak to us in visions and dreams. Dick Hamm, the former General Minister & President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has suggested that sometimes GOD has to resort to speaking into our dreams because we become jaded or we otherwise tune out GOD's voice. Indeed, being open to hearing for, and listening to, GOD's voice are key to receiving what GOD may have to say to us.

What are you doing to increase your ability to hear GOD? How have you increased your listening time? How can you increase your encounters with GOD?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# FRIDAY

The question, “How will I know it’s GOD’s voice I’m hearing?” is an important one. At the risk of sounding too ... too ... too anything, we need to acknowledge that if we believe there is a GOD WHO is good and a positive spiritual force, it goes without saying too much that there is also a negative spiritual force. Some call this force “Satan” (which comes from a Babylonian word meaning the “accuser” or “adversary”). Others speak of “the devil” or “the Enemy.” Scripture refers to “the Evil One.” We’re not suggesting we need to look for demons under every, or any, rock; but we do need to acknowledge that not everything everyone hears is good or positive. And, unfortunately, it is possible for negative spiritual forces—or even negative human forces—to try to get in the way of GOD’s good works.

So, how do we know what we’re hearing is GOD’s word for us? Start by resisting anything you “hear” that is negative or dangerously destructive and remember that GOD is a GOD of love WHO strives for wholeness and desires for the whole world to know, be loved by, and love HIM.

If you aren’t already, get involved in a prayer partnership or, better yet, a small group where you can talk about your praying and your prayers. Others can confirm and affirm our prayers and help us in our abilities to grow in praying.

Whatever you do, expect answers when you pray, ask for Jesus to guide and “interpret” GOD’s words for you, and never make excuses for GOD. Talk to a pastor if you ever hear anything that is dangerous or unnerving to you.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# SATURDAY

We get ready to close this week near where we started, with a caution that it's important to test what we think we're hearing when GOD speaks ... to make sure the voice we're hearing is GOD's and not our own or someone—or something—else's. Jesus HIMSELF was clear to discern, to distinguish, between what HE was hearing and saying and what GOD was speaking. One of the guiding questions we can ask ourselves is, "How does what I am 'hearing' help me love GOD with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? How does it help me love others and myself? How does it help others love GOD with the whole of their very beings, and/or help them come to love still others and themselves as well? If what you're hearing has nothing to do with any of these (or if they seem like a stretch), think twice or more times.

Use the space below to reflect on the last time you heard GOD speak and what you think HE was saying to you. What would you like for GOD to say to you?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## PRAYER CHARTING

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

**WEEK 2**

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE





## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK THREE

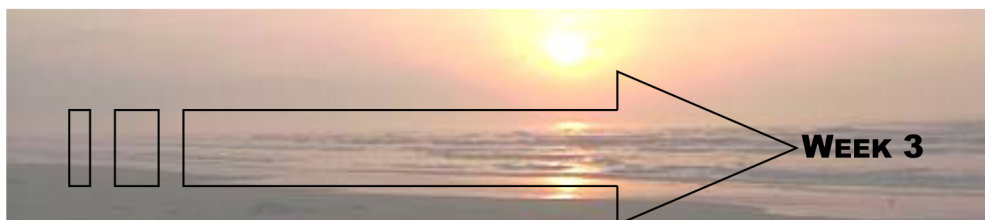
Can you believe we're about to enter Week 3 of our *VISION QUEST PRAYER SERIES*? To quickly recap, we spent the first week trying to *conceive* what GOD is capable of doing. Last week we thought a bit about how to *perceive* when GOD speaks to us. This week we are going to think about how to *receive* what GOD may want to do in and through us.

In the first chapter, fifth verse of the Older Testament book of Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 1.5*), GOD tells the prophet Jeremiah

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you....

GOD's words to Jeremiah are GOD's words to us still today. GOD knows you, just as GOD knows me. GOD set each of us in our mother's wombs (no matter how good or not-so-good a mother she was). GOD breathed life in to us for a reason. GOD has a reason, a purpose, a mission for us. GOD has appointed us....

This week we'll look at how GOD has been working with our prayers and consider a bit more what GOD may be saying to us....



## MONDAY

Because prayer is meant to be a foundation of our lives and living, it's important to ensure we have in place and continually practice well-rounded and grounded praying. That's why we're asking you to pray the *P'R'A'Y PRAYER* today. With time—if not already—you'll find your prayers fall into this model. For today, though, let's consciously engage it together.

And as you've been praying, are you noticing more praises or thank Yous? More to apologize for? More liberty to ask? More YES!-es?

### My P'R'A'Y Prayer for Today:

**P**

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**R**

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**A**

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**Y**

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## **TUESDAY**

Since we've begun this week mentioning the importance of prayer, particularly being conscious of our praying, let's be intentional about looking at our *PRAYER CHARTS*. Have you found any of your prayers answered yet? How and when have you thanked GOD for those responses? Are you able to sense an "in process" to any of your requests, a sense that GOD is working on your ask? Are there any requests you need to readdress or edit? Maybe you haven't asked "big" enough. Maybe GOD is asking you to be more specific. Maybe you've been too specific?

Go back through your *PRAYER CHART* today, add or edit as necessary, and use the space below to jot down any observations, questions, or other thoughts you may have. And don't forget to write in your *CHART* any answers you've received.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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## WEDNESDAY

Hopefully by now you've begun to get a glimpse of GOD's work, or working, in your life. Know that it's only just begun ... and if you haven't seen GOD's work yet, please know that GOD is, indeed, working.

Many of us experience any number of barriers that prevent us from being able to see GOD at work and, perhaps more than that, to be able to receive what GOD wants to do in, for, and through us. Of course, disbelief can be a great barrier. And the bent toward cynicism that seems to be running rampant in parts of the Western world these days (alas, particularly in the Church) doesn't help. It's important we approach prayer with anticipation of what GOD can do and an expectation that GOD *is* doing!

So what gets in the way of your being able to hear GOD's voice and detracts from your receiving what GOD is wanting to do for, in, and through you? Is it your cynicism or skepticism? Someone else's? Bad experiences with prayer or with pray-ers? Fear that GOD may not act? Fear that GOD *may* act? Write down your barriers in the space below ... and then ask GOD to remove those barriers for you. And don't forget to write those asks on your *PRAYER CHART*.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# THURSDAY

In the beginning of the Older Testament book of 1<sup>ST</sup> Samuel we find the story of a boy named Samuel whose parents have left him at the Temple to be raised by a priest named Eli. One night while Eli and Samuel are on Temple duty, Samuel hears a voice call out to him. Thinking it's Eli, Samuel goes to the priest and says, "Here I am!" Eli tells him he didn't call and instructs Samuel to go back to sleep. This happens again and then again. The third time Eli realizes it's GOD WHO's been calling out to Samuel. Eli tells Samuel to go and lay down again and should the LORD call once more, to answer, "Speak, LORD, for YOUR servant is listening" (1<sup>ST</sup> Samuel 3.8).

You'll notice how not even a *priest* recognized GOD's voice ... or that GOD was calling out to Samuel. And you'll notice, too, that Samuel—who himself will become one of the greatest priests and leaders of all time—didn't recognize GOD's voice and needed someone else to help him identify it!

Hopefully, these words come as a comfort to those of us who are not familiar with GOD's 'voice.' We can also learn from this story the need to ask GOD, "What do YOU want for me?" or "What do YOU want from me?" Spend some time today to ask GOD, "What do YOU want? What do YOU want to do in me? What do YOU want to do through me?" Jot down what you think GOD might want you to hear.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## FRIDAY

Today we're going to spend a bit more time with the story about Samuel and Eli that we mentioned yesterday, only today we're going to add another tool for hearing from GOD, *Lectio Divina*.

People have been practicing *Lectio Divina* since at least the sixth century AD. In its most basic form, it comprises four parts: *reading, reflecting, responding, and resting*. Before beginning *Lectio*, we offer a short prayer to ask GOD to clear our minds and speak to us through the exercise. Then we read or listen to a short passage of scripture; first once and then a second and a third time. With each reading or hearing, we become conscious of a word or phrase that “jumps out” at us; this leads us to the reflecting part: we ask ourselves what GOD may be trying to say to us with that word or phrase. In the responding part, we respond to the word or phrase in our mind with a prayer or praise or petition to GOD. Finally, we rest; we sit quietly in GOD's presence with our thoughts, perhaps jotting down what we're going to do with them or because of them.

Let's practice *Lectio Divina* (which, by the way, means *Divine Reading*) with the first ten verses of the third chapter of 1<sup>ST</sup> Samuel (we've printed the New International Version of 1<sup>ST</sup> Samuel 3.1 -10 on a following page). An outline for *Lectio* also follows and you can use the lines below and on the next page to jot your word, phrase, response, commitment, and/or notes and thoughts from the experience.

If you have an opportunity to do this with other people, take turns reading the passage—preferably reading it out of the same version of the Bible—two or three times.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# Thoughts CONTINUED

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## ***LECTIO DIVINA OVERVIEW***

As you get ready to engage *Lectio Divina*, get comfortable. Breathe in and out slowly and deeply. Say a prayer to invite GOD into your time with HIS word.

### **1. Read**

Read (or listen to) the text, listening for a word or phrase that “jumps” out to you.

Read (or listen to) the text again.... Again listen for the word or phrase that stands out for you.

Read (or listen to) the text again....

### **2. Reflect**

Reflect on your word or phrase. Why this word or phrase? What might God be trying to say to you in or with it?

### **3. Respond**

Use your word or phrase to reply to GOD: offer it to GOD as a prayer ... as a praise ... as a petition ... as a plea ... as a particular question ... as a commitment ... as a blessing....

### **4. Rest**

Be still and rest in GOD’s presence. Try to let go of your word and/or any images it’s inspired while asking GOD what, if anything, you are supposed to do as a result of this word or phrase.



## 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 3.1-10



<sup>1</sup>The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

<sup>2</sup>One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup>The lamp of GOD had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of GOD was. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

<sup>6</sup>Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

<sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD : The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if HE calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for YOUR servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for YOUR servant is listening."

## **SATURDAY**

Look back at your experience yesterday with *Lectio Divina*. What word or phrase stood out to you? Do you have a bit more insight about it today? If nothing stood out, try reading the passage again today, but feel free to be more direct with GOD:

*GOD, what do YOU want to say to me? What do YOU want from me? What do YOU want me to do with my life? What do YOU want me to do for YOU? What do YOU want with me? Speak to me so I can hear. Speak in a way I can understand. Point me in the direction I could go to meet and hear YOU.*

Write whatever comes to mind in the space below. Write in your journal or a notebook if you need more space.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK FOUR

As we move into Week 4, we're going to look at one of the last prayers Jesus offered while HE was still in a human body. Take time to read this passage each day—maybe do a little *Lectio Divina* with it?—and travel with us to see what Jesus' praying may have to say to us about our own praying.

<sup>1</sup>After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify YOUR SON so HE can give glory back to YOU. <sup>2</sup>For YOU have given HIM authority over everyone. HE gives eternal life to each one YOU have given HIM. <sup>3</sup>And this is the way to have eternal life—to know YOU, the only True GOD, and Jesus Christ, the one YOU sent to Earth. <sup>4</sup>I brought glory to YOU here on Earth by completing the work YOU gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now, FATHER, bring ME into the glory WE shared before the world began.

<sup>6</sup>"I have revealed YOU to the ones YOU gave me from this world. They were always YOURS. YOU gave them to ME, and they have kept YOUR word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything I have is a gift from YOU, <sup>8</sup>for I have passed on to them the message YOU gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from YOU, and they believe YOU sent ME.

<sup>9</sup>"My prayer is not for the world, but for those YOU have given ME, because they belong to YOU. <sup>10</sup>All who are MINE belong to YOU, and YOU have given them to ME, so they bring ME glory. <sup>11</sup>Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to YOU. Holy FATHER, YOU have given me YOUR NAME; now protect them by the power of YOUR NAME so that they will be united just as WE are. <sup>12</sup>During MY time here, I protected them by the power of the NAME you gave ME. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.



<sup>13</sup>“Now I am coming to You. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with MY joy. <sup>14</sup>I have given them YOUR word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I’m not asking YOU to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the Evil One. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup>Make them holy by YOUR Truth; teach them YOUR word, which is Truth. <sup>18</sup>Just as YOU sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by YOUR Truth.

<sup>20</sup>“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in ME through their message. <sup>21</sup>I pray that they will all be one, just as YOU and I are ONE—as YOU are in ME, FATHER, and I am in YOU. And may they be in US so that the world will believe YOU sent ME.

<sup>22</sup>“I have given them the glory YOU gave me, so they may be one as WE are ONE. <sup>23</sup>I am in them and YOU are in ME. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that YOU sent me and that YOU love them as much as YOU love ME. <sup>24</sup>FATHER, I want these whom YOU have given ME to be with Me where I am. Then they can see all the glory YOU gave me because YOU loved ME even before the world began!

<sup>25</sup>“O righteous FATHER, the world doesn’t know YOU, but I do; and these disciples know YOU sent me. <sup>26</sup>I have revealed YOU to them, and I will continue to do so. Then YOUR love for ME will be in them, and I will be in them.”

*John 17.1-26 in The New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible*  
© 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust, Tyndale House Publishers



**WEEK 4**

## MONDAY

As we look at Jesus' Prayer, we can see a few themes. Jesus' first and foremost prayer is that whatever happens, GOD is glorified ... GOD is seen and understood and loved as GOD, the Almighty, the King of Kings, and the LORD of LORDS. Jesus also acknowledges that GOD is HIS Creator and that who HE (Jesus) cannot be separated from the light and work of GOD: GOD has given HIM authority and the power to give others eternal life. GOD created Jesus to reveal GOD and GOD's heart to humanity. Jesus then asks boldly for HIS disciples: protection from the Evil One, joy, holiness, knowledge of GOD's Truths.

But HIS prayer doesn't stop there; it grows to encompass those of us who were not yet born and, as such, did not yet know Jesus. Yes, HE prayed on *our* behalf! HE prayed that as we come along, we too will come to be one with HIM and, beyond that, to become unified in GOD. HE prayed that we would receive Jesus and, through HIM, GOD. HE prayed that we would be *sanctified*—that we would find a holy relationship, a oneness, with GOD. And Jesus asks that with GOD in HIM and HE in us, people throughout all ages will come to see GOD and believe in HIM.

Can you see the elements of the *P•R•A•Y* PRAYER in Jesus' Prayer? Indeed, HE gives GOD thanks and praise, asks big, and then commits HIMSELF to the last of the work GOD has for HIM to do. You may note that the repentance part is missing. In actuality, since Jesus was GOD in a human body, HE did not sin; hence, HE had nothing for which to ask forgiveness.

How about you? As you read Jesus' prayer, what do you want to say to GOD? What do you need to say to GOD today?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# TUESDAY

Jesus mentions the power of GOD's name. In the centuries since, many have spoken about the power of Jesus' name. In *John 14.13-14*, Jesus says, "I will do whatever you ask in My name.... You may ask for anything in My name and I will do it."

Now, this doesn't mean that the words, "in Jesus' name" we often hear at the end of prayers are some kind of magical words that cause whatever we want to happen or not to happen. Rather, praying in Jesus' name means we pray with the authority that Jesus has given us through our relationship with HIM, trusting GOD will answer our prayers as HE sees fit. Perhaps the better way to close our prayers is with the request (acknowledgement?) "Your will be done, LORD."

We can ask for anything, but that's meant to be within the scope of GOD's will, ways, and wants. Are there any prayers you need to be editing? What do you need to do to learn more about GOD's will, ways, or wants? What will you do to work on one of those areas today? This week? Who will you allow to hold you accountable for this work? Call her or him today!

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## WEDNESDAY

Yesterday we noted that we have no magical incantations for praying. We probably should mention that it doesn't hurt to say something like "in Jesus' name" or "we pray in YOUR name, Jesus" at the end of our prayers so that we constantly remember WHO's really in charge!

We also noted that our prayers are meant to be aligned with GOD's will, ways, and wants. In several places in the Bible, we hear that GOD wants to give us the desires of our hearts (see *Psalms 20.4; 21.2; 37.4; 132.14; and 145.15, 19*). However, *Proverbs 16.3* holds this in perspective as it teaches us that whenever we commit our plans to the LORD, they will succeed. Keep in mind, though, this isn't another, "Hey GOD! Here's what I'm going to do; now bless it." Rather, the prayer goes more like, "GOD, I believe YOU want me to.... I commit myself to YOU and this plan. May it be YOURS and if it's not, please stop me sooner than later and allow me to cause as little harm as possible."

What is the desire of your heart? Do you think this is GOD's desire for you? If not, what do you think GOD's desire is for you? What keeps you from pursuing it? What would happen if you did? Who do you need to talk to about this?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# THURSDAY

For eons people have lost their faith because of disasters, disappointments, and other destructive dilemmas. Many of us know at least one person who is either mad at GOD or has left a congregation or the Church because things have not gone the way they expect them to “for those who love the LORD.”

Jesus’ prayer asks for protection and joy for those who know and love HIM. You’ll notice, though, that HE mentions HIS followers are hated and in need of protection from “the Evil One.” It proves once again that followers of Jesus are not exempt from disaster, disappointment, or destruction. Quite the contrary, we may be all the more at risk as the Evil One comes like a thief to “steal, kill, and destroy” (see John 10.10). Jesus’ prayer—which GOD is constantly answering—is for protection and joy. In *John 10.10*, Jesus says that HE has come so that we may have life, “and have it to the full.”

How full is your life? How protected do you feel? In what ways have you experienced joy (a peace that passes understanding, an assurance much deeper and more enduring than mere happiness)? How are you rising above the disasters, disappointments, and destruction in your life? Which ones continue to steal, kill, or even destroy the life GOD has for you?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## FRIDAY

Another aspect of Jesus' Prayer is HIS emphasis once again on the unity we humans are meant to have with HIM and GOD. Some call this a *relationship*. Others prefer to think of it in terms of a *partnership* in which Jesus is the CEO of our lives. Some call Jesus "friend." Today we offer some of Jesus' powerful names, inviting you to write down those that stand out to you. Why do you think they resonate with you today?

I AM  
Abba (*Father*)  
Almighty GOD  
Alpha-Omega (*Beginning & End*)  
Ancient of Days  
Eternal  
GOD WHO is Present  
LORD of All  
LORD of Hosts  
LORD of Lords  
LORD of Righteousness  
LORD WHO Provides  
Merciful GOD  
Mighty One  
Most High GOD  
Our Healer  
Shepherd  
Strong One WHO Sees

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## SATURDAY

Many of us often overlook a key element of Jesus' Prayer—His prayer for *unity*. Along the ways, different ones of us have come to interpret this differently. Some believe that all who believe in GOD are meant to be in unity with one another, regardless of our faith persuasion (i.e., Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, etc.). Within congregations, many of us have come to equate unity with unanimity: that all decisions are meant to be unanimous.

The great preacher, teacher, and church planter Paul gives us a hint to *unity* in his letter to the people who were living in Ephesus in the years following Jesus' death. Paul tells us in this letter, recorded in the Newer Testament book *Ephesians*, that the unity to which Jesus refers is a unity of our Faith and of our knowledge of GOD's Son, Jesus, so that we will "be mature in the LORD, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Jesus Christ" (see *Ephesians 4.11-16*).

Like Jesus, we are called to pray that all will come to know GOD through Jesus Christ and that we all will—that all humanity will—come to be mature in the LORD. This doesn't mean we strive for unanimity (which is usually an issue because not everyone in our congregations is mature in their Faith or relationship with GOD!). It means we strive for all to be united through our love and relationship with GOD and Jesus Christ.

Does our congregation strive more for unity or unanimity? On a scale of "0" to "9," how mature is our congregation? On a scale of "0" to "9," how does our congregation measure up to the full and complete standard of Jesus? Resist making excuses for our congregation (not uncommon but not helpful!).

Write your thoughts in the space below and on the next page, then close with a *P'R'A'Y PRAYER*.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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**My P'R'A'Y Prayer for Today:**

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## SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK FIVE

We are engaging this *VISION QUEST PRAYER SERIES* with the express hope that GOD will speak through our prayers to give us as a congregation direction into the future, to help us hear what GOD's "what's next" is for our congregation. And that is why we're spending so much time working on different ways to hear GOD and to learn more about ways to pray most effectively.

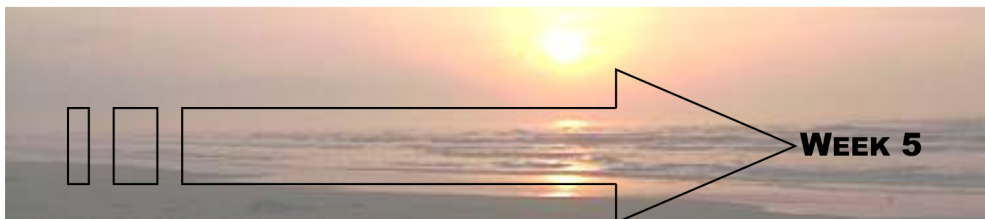
This week we're going to study the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, *The LORD's Prayer*. Interestingly, some have said that the prayer we prayed last week (what we called "Jesus' Prayer") should be called the LORD's Prayer and this one should be called the "Disciples' Prayer"; millions of other Christians call it the "Our Father Prayer." Whatever we call it, we cannot deny that it offers Jesus' own instructions for the ways we should pray.

There are different versions of The LORD's Prayer, so we offer this one from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) where we find these words spoken by Jesus in *Matthew 6.9-13*:

<sup>9</sup> Pray, then, in this way: "Our Father WHO is in Heaven, Hallowed be YOUR NAME. <sup>10</sup>YOUR Kingdom come YOUR will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For YOURS is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen."

NASB © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

If you do not already know this prayer, you may want to take some time this week to memorize it. You won't ever regret it!



## MONDAY

Jesus told HIS disciples, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father WHO is in Heaven, Hallowed be YOUR name....'"

Early in this study, we differentiated between *praise* and *thanksgiving*: praise is praising GOD for WHO GOD is: "Hallowed (*Holy*) be YOUR NAME...." When was the last time you went through your *PRAYER CHART* to check on GOD's answers to your requests? How have you been thanking HIM for those answers? What have the answers taught you about GOD's nature, about WHO GOD is? How can this help you praise GOD more effectively?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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**TUESDAY**

“Your Kingdom come Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven....”

Jesus noted that GOD’s Kingdom is “at hand,” or *present*. The problem is, we humans just aren’t able—or ready—to see It yet. What do you think life in GOD’s Kingdom looks like? What do you think GOD’s will being done on Earth the same way GOD’s will is done in Heaven looks like? How can our congregation help people learn about GOD’s Kingdom? How might our congregation be a manifestation or reflection of GOD’s Kingdom here on Earth?

**Thoughts for and from Today**

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## WEDNESDAY

“Give us this day our daily bread....”

This short sentence reminds us that GOD can take care of our every need, though *needs* do not always equal *wants*. A logical question to this statement might be, “But what about the children who will go hungry today or die of malnutrition as their parents walk too many miles for too little food?” We have to remember that we still do not live in the world GOD intends, that we live in a broken and fragmented world and that GOD has chosen not to play puppet-master and try once again to make everything “okay” (the Bible’s Older Testament is full of examples about what happens whenever HE does).

This doesn’t keep us from asking for our every need, but we also have to keep the words of Jesus’ follower Matthew (who wrote the first book of the Newer Testament) in front of us. Matthew tells us that our Heavenly FATHER knows what we need but we have to “seek first HIS Kingdom and HIS righteousness [so that] all these things will be given to you as well” (*Matthew 6.31-33*).

And let us not forget that Jesus uses us to be HIS Tangible Touch in this broken and fragmented world. Maybe HE wants you to share that bread HE’s given you with someone else?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# THURSDAY

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors....”

*Unforgiveness* is one of the most common reasons folks give for GOD not answering our prayers. Perhaps someone has told you that our inability to ask forgiveness from another, to forgive others, or to forgive ourselves leads to God’s refusal to answer our prayers.

Many of us have people we think we’ll never be able to forgive, but Jesus calls us to at least *consider* forgiving them. Do keep in mind there is a difference between *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. There are those with whom it would be dangerous or otherwise detrimental to reconcile, particularly those who have abused or misused us (and vice versa). This doesn’t mean we can’t ask GOD to forgive them or to help us forgive them. Without forgiveness, though, anger and bitterness and resentment will find fertilizer in our spirits and eventually choke out anything good GOD is trying to do in and through us. They also have a way of colouring GOD’s voice, will, and ways.

Whom do you need to forgive? Whom do you need to ask to forgive you? For what may you need to forgive yourself?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## FRIDAY

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil....”

In a broken and fragmented world, evil abounds and brings with it rampant temptation. Few, if any, of us have been able to escape addiction or abuse; it's been said that every family has been touched by it in one way or another.

The truth is, nearly all of us struggle with one or more temptations that seek to further steal, kill, or otherwise destroy us, our relations, our relationships. For some of us it's alcohol or an addiction to any or everything from drugs to gambling to sex to pornography to workaholism to perfectionism.... You get the picture.

Anything that captures our attention and draws it away from God and what HE wants for our lives is a temptation and runs the risk of drawing us to places we wouldn't consciously want to go.

So what is getting in the way of your ability to relate to, and to hear from, GOD. Offer it in a prayer (as a **R**epentance?) to Jesus. Make an appointment to talk to someone who can help you, or direct you to help: your doctor, your pastor, a counselor, a support group (just make sure it's someone of the same sex). Use the space below to TODAY commit your plans and share your commitment with someone who will have your best interest at heart.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## SATURDAY

“For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.”

We closed last week with some of the names of GOD. This week we end with three of God’s attributes:

the Kingdom of GOD belongs to HIM,

HE is all powerful, and

all Glory belongs to HIM forever and forever.

What else do you know to be True about GOD? How do you know that to be the case? Record it in the space below and in your journal or notebook if you need more room.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK SIX

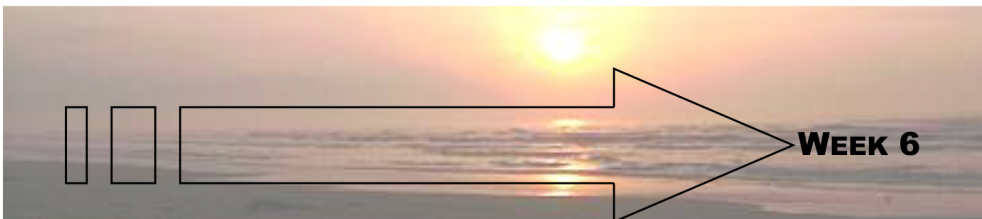
Praying with hundreds, probably thousands, of people over the years has shown that many of us are more comfortable asking prayer for others than we are asking prayer for ourselves. Still, our prayers for others tend to be more hit-and-miss, or by need, than by design. This week we're going to try to expand our praying past those for whom we most immediately think to pray. Hear the words we find in the Newer Testament letter Paul wrote to the Romans:

<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup>Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the LORD. <sup>12</sup>Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Share with GOD's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the LORD. <sup>20</sup>On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*Romans 12.9-21*



# MONDAY

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the LORD. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

There are at least thirty-five "One Others" in the Newer Testament of the Bible, statements about how Christians are to treat "one another" (in some translations of the Bible, these passages say "each other"). Above we find one of them: we are to honor one another above ourselves. The rest of the paragraph provides us with suggestions for how to pray for one another. For whom in our congregation do you need to pray and how? Record your thoughts below and add them to your *PRAYER CHART*.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# TUESDAY

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

As we mentioned last week, some of the hardest prayers we have to pray are for our enemies. Take a moment today to focus beyond Paul's words and see if you can visualize Jesus' execution, when HE was hanging on the cross. Jesus has been repeatedly beaten, publicly mocked and scorned, HIS life blood is literally running out yet HE musters the words, "FATHER, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing" (*Luke 23.34*). Knowing scripture as HE did, it's possible that Jesus held onto the words from *Psalms 22*, a great Psalm to be read or said when you feel everyone's against you ... a great reminder that ultimately GOD is in control and most of us don't know what we're doing anyway. In fact, you might want to read *Psalms 22*\* today and see how it may inform your prayers for those who are making your life a living Hell.

\*If you don't have a Bible, ask your pastor for one.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## **WEDNESDAY**

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone

Not all of us have enemies but nearly all of us have those we're not particularly fond of ... those who drive us up a wall or we find it difficult to like.

Today we're going to practice an exercise called "Seeing Through GOD's Eyes." When we see people through GOD's eyes we try to see the good that GOD sees in others. The reality is, GOD creates each of us good and although the good may seem to be buried deeper in some of us than in others, it is nonetheless there. This exercise helps us to see the good GOD sees in others, to celebrate that goodness, and to try to let that goodness shift our perceptions of the person for whom we need to pray.

*Seeing Through GOD's Eyes* begins with a prayer that GOD will show us something good in the person on whom we are going to concentrate. We then try to identify what is good in them. This exercise can be quite difficult for some people; it's taken days and even weeks for some of us to see the good that GOD sees. Spend only three to five minutes a day working on this, but continue trying each day until you see the good (and trust that it's in there!). Once you find one bit of good, go for another and another. Amazingly, you'll find that not only does your perception about this person change, your attitude will change as well. Once you've accomplished this with one person, go on to another ... and another ... and another....

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# THURSDAY

So far this week we've talked about praying for one another, for those we don't particularly like, and for our flat-out enemies. Today we're going to broaden the scope of our prayers for others to praying for our community, the "neighborhood" where we live.

Have you given much thought to your neighbors? Do you know them? Do you know if they know GOD? Do you know if they have a church they go to on a regular basis? When was the last time you invited them to come to yours?

It's no secret that many of us are living in transitional neighborhoods or communities and we are hesitant, or completely reticent, to meet our neighbors let alone invite them to do something with us. But how will our communities change if people don't get to meet Jesus? How else will we get to see individuals change if it's not for the intervention of the Great Physician? How will people come to know Jesus as their LORD and Saviour, the Prince of Peace, and the King of Kings if we aren't praying for them individually and as a community ...and for us and how GOD wants to use us?

Be strong, bold, and courageous today as you pray for your community. And don't be afraid to jot down your concerns....

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# FRIDAY

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone—<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all Godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases GOD our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the Truth.

*1<sup>ST</sup> Timothy 2.1-4*

A lot of us have concerns about our local, state, and federal governments, so much so that we spend a lot of time kvetching or complaining *ad nauseam*. You'd think that all our expressed opinions will somehow change the world. In Paul's second letter to his apprentice Timothy, Paul reminds us how to pray for those in government.

What do you think might happen if instead of ranting about the school board, we begin to pray for each member of the school board, particularly those who are not yet Christians? What if we prayed they come to not only know but *follow* Jesus? What would happen if we invited them to be part of our congregation?

Who do you need to pray for today, this week, this next year? How will you follow through on those prayers? Who will you invite to pray with you? Write your thoughts below and your asks on your *PRAYER CHART*. This is a good time to pray *specifically*!

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## SATURDAY

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave His charge: "GOD authorized and commanded ME to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. Then instruct them in the practice of everything I've commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

*Matthew 28.18-20 in The Message*  
© 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

It's been argued that the words recorded above (what's become known as *The Great Commission*) are Jesus' last command before returning to Heaven and, as such, has to be all the more obeyed. But, let's face it: not many of us are into doing things merely because we're told to do them ... even if Jesus HIMSELF told us to do it!

Nonetheless, Jesus' direction to train everyone we meet to become followers of GOD (not just to be "Christians" but , rather, to be "disciples," those who live as Jesus teaches us). This training begins with introducing people to the man named Jesus, encouraging them to acknowledge and receive HIM as their LORD and Saviour, and walking with them—with one another—to practice and live all Jesus has taught *and* teaches us.

This is a daunting task for many of us, so daunting that for centuries too few of us have engaged it. Today's prayer method can help us start to practice the *Great Commission*. We call this the *Five Most Wanted* Prayer because it entails praying for five people you know who currently have little or no relationship with a congregation (they may be a "member" but if they're not attending on more than a once or twice a year basis, they do not have a *relationship* with that congregation.

On the next page you'll find your own *Most Wanted* List. Write down your five names (or a description of the person if you don't know his/her name) and begin to pray today. You'll find further instructions when you turn the page....

**WEEK 6** 

# WANTED!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Each day pray for:

1. **OPPORTUNITY** - that GOD will give you an opportunity to invite those on your list:  
GOD, please given me an opportunity to invite someone on this List to something connected with YOU and/or our congregation.
2. **AWARENESS** - that GOD will make it obvious when the opportunity arrives:  
And, GOD, please make it clear when that opportunity arrives ...
3. **COURAGE** - that GOD will give you the courage to extend the invitation.  
and give me the courage to invite him/her....
4. **FAVOR** - that GOD will be working in the people on your list so they'll favorably receive your invitations, GOD's Invitation.  
I thank YOU, GOD, that YOU are already working in \_\_\_\_\_. Please help him/her to hear my invitation as YOUR invitation and to receive it well. Amen.

# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK SEVEN

As we mentioned last week, praying for others appears to be much easier than praying for ourselves, except perhaps when we're in trouble or extreme need. This week we're going to consider some ways we can efficiently and effectively pray for ourselves.

To help us, we're going to start with a short prayer that gained quite a bit of buzz several years ago, *The Prayer of Jabez*, which we can find in 1<sup>ST</sup> Chronicles 4.10. Really, we only know four things about Jabez, all found in verses nine and ten of 1<sup>ST</sup> Chronicles chapter 4: he was more honorable than his brothers, his mother experienced a great deal of pain when he was born, he prayed a very specific prayer, and GOD granted Jabez' request.

Many have said it is both selfish and irresponsible to pray Jabez' prayer for one's self, but just as many—maybe more—have been praying this prayer with amazing stories of the ways GOD has granted their requests! As with all the other prayers we've discussed over the past six weeks, this prayer is not to be prayed irresponsibly or with the thought of personal gain apart for what our influence can do for the Kingdom of GOD.

Here is Jabez' prayer. Try interpreting it for yourself. What might it mean for GOD to bless you and enlarge your territory, your influence? Would you feel more courageous know GOD's hand is on you and HE will help you cause no pain?

And Jabez called on the GOD of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that YOUR hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain." So GOD granted him what he requested.

*New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible*  
© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.





# **MONDAY**

Many of us have been conditioned to think we are being selfish when we ask or advocate on our own behalf. It shows up in our reluctance to speak out when we're being wronged and in our reticence to ask for raises. Yet, if you'll remember, even in the prayer Jesus taught us, HE tells us to pray for ourselves: give us this day our daily bread ... forgive us our sins ... lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil....

What gets in the way of your praying for yourself? What keeps you from asking someone to pray specifically for *you* or a need that *you* have? What do you need to do to move past those barriers?

## **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# TUESDAY

Jabez asked GOD to bless him mightily and to expand his territory ... his influence. What might GOD's blessing on, or for, you look like? What might that blessing look like in regard to your ability to influence others? What kind of influence might you have? How would, or could, you use that influence? How could you benefit and enlarge GOD's Territory? What do you need to ask for today that will have a positive effect on your influence and your ability to wield it for GOD's benefit? How do you want GOD to bless you so you can be a blessing for HIM?

Ask GOD for that today. Go ahead.... It's okay!

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## WEDNESDAY

A few weeks ago we mentioned several scriptures from the Older Testament of the Bible that refer to GOD's desire to give us the desires of our hearts. Among them are:

May HE give you the desire of your heart  
and make all your plans succeed.

*Psalm 20.4*

You have granted him the desire of his heart and  
have not withheld the request of his lips.

*Psalm 21.2*

Delight yourself in the LORD and HE will give you  
the desires of your heart.

*Psalm 37.4*

What are the desires of your heart? What keeps you from speaking them? What keeps you from seeking them? Use the space below to try to get them out, and then speak them to GOD.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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# THURSDAY

Yesterday we talked about asking GOD for the desires of our hearts (as though HE doesn't already know what those are!). But we cannot leave this topic of asking for ourselves without noting that ultimately the desires of our heart are meant to be in alignment with the desires of GOD's heart: in alignment with GOD's will and ways. The prophet Isaiah put it this way, "Yes, LORD, walking in the ways of YOUR laws, we wait for YOU; YOUR NAME and renown are the desires of our hearts" (Isaiah 26.8).

In another Older Testament book, we find this prayer spoken by the great King David:

I know, my GOD, that YOU test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly YOUR people who are here have given to YOU.<sup>18</sup> O LORD, GOD of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; keep this desire in the hearts of YOUR people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to YOU.

*1st Chronicles 29.17*

How might you amend your prayers from yesterday based on what you are hearing today?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## FRIDAY

Perhaps you've heard the saying, "Be careful what you pray for." Those who have been praying for any amount of time know the truth and accuracy of this statement. GOD is a faithful and generous GOD. GOD hears, honors, and answers our prayers; so it is not too far-fetched to believe that GOD can and will answer the various asks you've been asking.

Perhaps you've been asking for a lot. Perhaps you haven't been asking for enough. Have you been keeping track of your prayer requests? Have you been going through and checking on how GOD is answering them? What have you learned so far about your prayers and how GOD answers? How is that affecting how you pray, or are going to pray, for yourself?

Some of the people who have prayed the *Prayer of Jabez* have noted that there are times when they want to pray, "Wait, GOD! Enough! Could YOU stop enlarging my territory, at least for a little while?"! How about you? Is there anything you want GOD to hold on to for a while? Anything you're not quite ready to receive or accept? Make a note of it below.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## **SATURDAY**

Many people prioritize their lives: (1) GOD, (2) family, (3) work, (4) self. There are a few fallacies with ordering our priorities this way. First, we tend to equate GOD with Church far too often, and far too many of us give more time to the Church than we do to GOD. Others of us would like to think we put GOD first and family second; but, again more realistically, work too often creeps up the priority ladder.

There's another large problem, though, and it's not merely a matter of reality. Indeed, GOD needs to be the number one priority in our lives. We live because of HIM and the least we can do is find HIS will and ways for us, HIS reasons for creating us, and then do our best to fulfill this mission, our life's purpose.

More than family, work, or anything else; we need to put ourselves second on the priority list ... right after GOD. If we don't take care of ourselves, we ultimately will be of no use to anyone else. And there is not much sadder than seeing someone with so much life to give debilitated physically, emotionally, or spiritually because they did not make themselves, their needs, their care a priority.

It is not only okay to pray for ourselves. We have to do it! We have to pray for guidance, for direction, for clarity, for wisdom. And we have to be prepared to receive and be a good steward of the gifts and blessings GOD will answer with.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK EIGHT

There is so much more we could say about praying for ourselves, but we need to keep moving through this QUEST. Just don't hasten past praying for yourself on a continual basis. Remember, you can't effectively pray for others if you are not staying prayed-up yourself. And this week we have some more BIG prayers to ask!

Indeed, this week we begin to focus in on praying for the Church. As we've probably mentioned, the great early-Church preacher and teacher Paul planted a number of churches with whom he kept in contact (imagine that in the days before email, telephones, and postal services like we know today!). Paul's heart for these congregations is well known and we have a number of the prayers he prayed for them.

This week we're going to focus on one of the prayers Paul prayed for the Christians in Philippi, a city in eastern Macedonia. Paul's prayer reminds us of the connectedness between congregations and the responsibility we have to pray not merely for our own congregations but for the Church as a whole.

Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to GOD. Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming GOD's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the GOD who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

<sup>7-8</sup>It's not at all fanciful for me to think this way about you. My prayers and hopes have deep roots in reality. You have, after all, stuck with me all the way from the time I was thrown in jail, put on trial, and came out of it in one piece. All along you have experienced with me the most generous help from GOD. HE knows how much I love and miss you these days. Sometimes I think I feel as strongly about you as Christ does!



## PHILIPPIANS 1.3-21 CONTINUED



<sup>9-11</sup> So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the LORD. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*The Message* © 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson



**WEEK 8**

# MONDAY

Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is for the congregation: the individuals in it as well as the congregation as a whole. He begins by giving thanks: “Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to GOD!” Don’t you love those words? I *break out in exclamations* of thanks to GOD! Whew-HOOOOOOOOOO! What in our congregation gives you pause to *break out in exclamations of praise*?

Besides his joy and pride in this congregation, Paul has a huge heart for it, loving them nearly as much as Jesus does. How deeply do you love the congregation you find yourself in? Do you love it as much as Jesus does? How do you pray for it?

For what do you need to give GOD thanks today? What do you need to ask for on behalf of this congregation? Write your thoughts below and record your asks in your *PRAYER CHART*.

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# TUESDAY

This week's prayer is pretty direct about how we treat those who persecute and even abuse us. While we'd like to think otherwise, we have to say that pastors are often one of the most persecuted and abused groups of people. As the "front person" for the congregation, they tend to be the targets of folks' dislikes, disgust, and disdain ... even when the decisions the pastors represent and publicly support have little if anything to do with them as pastors, let alone as individuals.

Is it any wonder pastors need our prayers? Living up to the challenges of being a minister are hard enough without the added dynamics that come with ministry. The hours are long, the pay often not enough, and the demands super-human. So today we continue praying for our congregations, adding specifically prayers for our pastor's/pastors' health, well-being, strength, perseverance, ability to live a life Jesus will be proud of and people will be inspired by, etc.

Having trouble praying for your pastor/s? Practice below....

## Thoughts for and from Today

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## WEDNESDAY

Today we're going to expand our prayers for our congregation's leadership. While people may be good leaders in their households, their business, or their communities; they may not be the best of *Christian* leaders, let alone congregational leaders. How can we pray for our congregation's leadership? Here are a few thoughts from the Bible:

Love the LORD, all His saints!

*Psalm 31.23a*

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

*Galatians 6.9*

May the GOD of Peace ... that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing HIS will, and may HE work in us what is pleasing to HIM, through Jesus Christ, to WHOM be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*Hebrews 13.20-21*

If a person cleanses themselves ... they will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

*2<sup>ND</sup> Timothy 2.21*

Be shepherds of GOD's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as GOD wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

*1<sup>ST</sup> Peter 5.2-4*

How will you pray for our congregation's leaders, both paid and volunteer, today ... this week ... into the future?





## **THURSDAY**

As we mentioned earlier, praying for the “Church” entails more than praying for our particular congregation. GOD has provided for a number of congregations, together comprising “The Church.”

It’s common to find competition between congregations, even within a given denomination. People get mad and go to another congregation. Folks get upset when congregations engage in “sheep stealing” (as well they should when this is engaged as a form of *evangelism* or commentary on the teachings or doctrine of a given congregation or denomination). Conversely, we need a variety of congregations, as each congregation has its own strengths (and, yes, weaknesses) and is better suited for some people than others.

Think for a moment what your congregation’s strengths are. What about a neighboring congregation? What are their strengths? How might you pray for that congregation? How could you pray for the Church Universal? What do you think GOD wants to accomplish through the Bride of Christ (one of the metaphors the Bible uses for the Church)? How will you pray for your sister congregations today? How will you pray for *The Church*?

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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# FRIDAY

Chances are, if you are using this *VISION QUEST*, your congregation is part of a denomination, or collection of congregations. Denominations exist for a number of reasons, some more agreed upon than others. Historically, denominations have been vehicles through which congregations are able to combine their resources to provide greater witness and mission throughout the world. Denominations have also traditionally provided resourcing and training for pastors and congregations, those who are on the frontlines of ministry and mission.

Today, denominational pastors and staff face much of the same pressures congregational pastors and staff face, only it's often exponentially multiplied. Those prayers you have been offering for your pastors and leaders are needed by your denominational pastors and leaders, too: from those you see more often to those who serve you at the national and international expressions of the Church.

Please remember them ... and take time to let them know!

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# SATURDAY

As we've mentioned, there can be a lot of competition between congregations. Yet Jesus' hope and vision for the Church, HIS Bride, is nothing short of unity. You may remember in HIS prayer from Week 4 that Jesus prayed that all who will ever believe in HIM and HIS message will "be one" just as Jesus and GOD are ONE:

May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that YOU sent me and that YOU love them as much as YOU love ME.

*John 17.23b, NLT*

Does our congregation act independently or as part of a larger Church? How can our congregation become better aligned with the rest of The Bride? What does your prayer for unity need to be today?

## Thoughts for and from Today

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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# LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK NINE

Hopefully you have found time during the course of this Prayer Series to meet regularly with others in our congregation who are praying, too. Up until now, though, most of our focus has been on individual prayer.

However, this week, we're going to begin concentrating on praying not merely *for* our congregation but *as* a congregation. Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah when he said, "It is written ... 'My house will be called a house of prayer....'" (Matthew 21.13). Hopefully you have been discovering for yourself how powerful your prayers are. Now, multiply that exponentially when we pray with others!

One of the most vivid examples of congregational prayer comes in the fourth chapter of the Newer Testament's Book of Acts, just after the great first-Church leaders Peter and John have been released from an overnight stay in jail. After Peter and John return to their congregation and tell them everything they've experienced, the congregation begins to pray, praising GOD and asking GOD: "stretch out YOUR hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the NAME of your Holy Servant Jesus." Acts 4 tells us, "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the HOLY SPIRIT and spoke the word of GOD boldly" (Acts 4.23-31).

What an opportunity we have this week to join together to explore this dynamic of praying as a congregation.



## MONDAY

Jesus' follower Matthew records in the Newer Testament book by his name:

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on Earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by MY FATHER in Heaven.<sup>20</sup> For where two or three come together in MY NAME, there am I with them."

*Matthew 18.19-20*

We commonly use this passage to remind ourselves that when two or more of us gather together, we can be assured that Jesus is in our midst. [NOTE TO SELVES: Jesus is *always* in our midst, whether alone or with two or three or thousands!] What we don't tend to pay too much attention to is that word *agree*.

Read again these two short verses. What word or phrase jumps out at you? Read it again. What do you see now? What do you think GOD may be trying to say to you today?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## TUESDAY

*Spiritual agreement* is more than two or more people having the same opinion; it transcends beliefs, desires, and mere agreement. The key word in *spiritual agreement* is *spiritual*. Spiritual agreement comes when the hearts and spirits of those who are praying are united in and because of the HOLY SPIRIT.

It's been said that some congregational disagreements are the result of not everyone being able to hear what GOD is trying to say. We already know that there are times when what "I" want or think gets in the way of what GOD wants or is thinking ... and, as such, spiritual agreement is disrupted. Some congregations wait to settle on decisions until the whole of the congregation is in agreement ... until they are clear they are hearing what GOD is trying to say to them ... until they are in agreement spiritually!

Of course, this can only be accomplished in congregations where folks are able to communicate with one another and everyone is open to what GOD is communicating. That's a pretty tall order for a lot of congregations. BUT IT IS POSSIBLE! If you're not sure our congregation as a whole is ready for praying in agreement, you can start—or at least start practicing—by praying with two or three others.

Who will you invite to pray with you ... to join you in prayer? When? How? Make a date now to start praying in agreement!

### Thoughts for and from Today

I'm going to ask to pray with me:

When:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## **WEDNESDAY**

As the introduction to this week mentioned, those of us participating in this *VISION QUEST* have prayed more as individuals in a congregation than as a congregation who is praying together. Many of the daily reflections have encouraged us to pray in a specific way, but there has still been quite a bit of freedom about what we have prayed.

In a couple of weeks, we as a congregation will begin to really zero in on the prayer, "GOD, tell us **WHAT** you want us to do as **YOUR** congregation." Our ability to hear GOD, to move past our own desires, to move past the voices in our heads and in our midsts will be tested and tested. Some of us will have to struggle past our selfishness and others of us will have to muster up the courage to be more courageous in our praying and our ability to hear GOD.

In an effort to practice this level of congregational prayer, contact your pastor or your Board Chair or another member of our congregation's leadership and ask them how you can pray for our congregation today. Write their response below and add it to your Prayer Chart. Then pray.

### **Thoughts for and from Today**

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## FRIDAY

We are aware that not everyone welcomes the invitations to pray such as those we've extended this week. Praying boldly and big can be scary or otherwise threatening. Some of us are still learning how to pray and others of us continue to wrestle with for what it's okay to pray.

Remember, there are no magical words when it comes to praying: we can speak or write or think whatever's on our heart or in our mind. The only difference between thinking thoughts and praying is that we converse with GOD about what we're thinking ... and sooner or later we likely find ourselves asking HIM to do something about, or with, those thoughts.

But what happens when we don't know how to pray or what to do with those thoughts? Be assured that the HOLY SPIRIT knows and

intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And HE WHO searches our hearts knows the mind of the SPIRIT because the SPIRIT intercedes for the saints in accordance with GOD's will.

*Romans 8.26-27*

What prayers have you found it difficult or impossible to speak? Will you write them below and sit quietly, allowing the SPIRIT to pray on your behalf today?

### Thoughts for and from Today

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## SATURDAY

Re-read this week's opening passage: *1<sup>ST</sup> Kings 8.27-30*. You may want to try practicing *Lectio Divina* with it, asking GOD to give you a word for your congregation. This prayer might sound something like,

GOD, I thank YOU that YOU speak to, through, and for us. As I read these verses today, please speak through them and give me an insight or confirmation or affirmation or correction or something for our congregation. I thank YOU and offer this prayer with confidence in Jesus' NAME. Amen.

Use the space below and on the following pages to write the word or phrase that stand out to you. Think about why that word or phrase might be so prominent for you today and write down what you think GOD may be trying to say to you ... or asking you to do. If appropriate, write down how you plan to respond!

You might also try another method folks use to hear GOD: journaling. If you'd like to try this, start with a prayer like the one above (you want to make sure GOD is guiding this process!). You could use the space provided to jot down any questions or thoughts that come to mind. If you write a question, pause to see if an answer comes to mind. You might be surprised to see how GOD responds to questions like, "What am I supposed to do with this, GOD?" or "Does this really have any meaning for me?" Write what you "hear" (and, yes, it may still "sound" like what you are thinking). Remember that GOD speaks nothing that is dangerous, destructive, or detrimental to us or anybody else.

### Thoughts for and from Today

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Lined writing area consisting of 24 horizontal lines.



# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK TEN

This week we begin moving into what we've been preparing for over the past nine weeks: listening for what GOD may be wanting to do for, in, and through our congregation ... discovering what GOD wants us to do in the weeks, months, years ahead.

Another congregation to whom the apostle Paul wrote was the one in Colossae (located in modern Turkey). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking GOD to fill you with the knowledge of HIS will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup>And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the LORD and may please HIM in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of GOD, <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power according to HIS glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the FATHER, WHO has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light.

*Colossians 1.9-12*

This is our prayer for you as we move into the final weeks of this Prayer Series. May you as a congregation be filled with wisdom and understanding so that you know GOD's will when you see and hear it. May your congregation find spiritual agreement so that you will find a new life that is pleasing to GOD, a life that will bear much good work and even more fruit. May you find GOD's strength and power, be inspired to patiently endure, experience deep joy, and remember to give GOD all the glory with exclamations of thanks and praise.

To get ready, we're going to spend this week reviewing what we've learned as we ask, "What do YOU want us to do, GOD?"



# MONDAY

Spend today going through your *PRAYER CHART*. On the following pages we've added several new *PRAYER CHART* lines. You might use these to "move forward" some of those prayers for which you are still waiting answers. Which prayers has GOD answered? What have you learned over the past nine weeks about how you pray? About how GOD "speaks" to you? What questions do you have about prayer and praying? Take time this week to ask your pastor or someone you know to be a person of deep prayer, someone you know to be a real "prayer warrior."

If you haven't already, add a request that *WHAT* GOD is calling this congregation to do will come through loudly and clearly.

## **What do You want our congregation— YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE



DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER	DATE

**WEEK 10**

## TUESDAY

Again today we are concentrating on the request that GOD speak to us clearly about *what* HE is calling this congregation to do. Below is a passage from the Newer Testament book of Acts that outlines the four purposes of the Church: *Worship*, *One-anothering* (*ministry*, how we serve one another in our congregation), *Reaching others* (*mission*, how we reach those outside the Church), and *Discipleship* (teaching and helping one another to live as Jesus teaches).

Find time today to engage this passage with *Lectio Divina* or journaling and record your responses to the question:

What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising GOD and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the LORD added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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Handwriting practice lines consisting of 26 horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page.



## WEDNESDAY

Just as in the rest of our lives, it's easy to fall into a rut when it comes to praying: our prayers become rote and routine. There's much to be said about routine when it comes to praying—it helps keep us on track and praying, particularly when we might be most tempted to skip talking to GOD. But it's equally important to make sure our prayers are well-rounded.

If you haven't lately, write your prayer for today in the space below, checking to make sure you are praying all the parts of the *P'R'A'Y Prayer* (**P**raise and thanksgiving, **R**epentance, **A**sking, and **Y**es-sing).

And don't forget to pray for congregational clarity, or whatever else it is the HOLY SPIRIT is having you pray for the congregation. What yes or yes-es might you be needing to commit today?

### **What do You want our congregation— YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

**P**

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**R**

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**A**

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**Y**

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# THURSDAY

Spend today collecting your thoughts and jotting notes in response to the question we've been asking this week:

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

"Speak, for your servant is listening."

*Samuel 3.10b*

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## FRIDAY

We're going to spend today again collecting our thoughts and jotting notes in preparation for next week. Go back through the past weeks of this QUEST and jot down anything that jumps out at you that might be relevant for our congregation. Even though you might not have thought of it in this way, GOD may be speaking to you through your jottings of the past ten weeks.

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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# SATURDAY

Throughout history (even still today), GOD has used prophets to speak to HIS people. People called to be prophets are generally not the most popular or well-liked people; indeed, they are usually exiled and executed. People with “prophetic voices” in the Church today are often disregarded and held with disdain.

We say this today because it’s possible you have been gifted with one of those prophetic voices. Perhaps you have been “hearing” very clear messages from GOD that you are wondering whether or not you should share with the congregation. We’ll say more about that this next week, but for today let us say again that it is critical to have prayer partners and at least one spiritually mature person with whom you can wonder and wrestle and work on spiritual agreement. If you don’t know someone like that in your congregation, ask your pastor to recommend a spiritual director or retreat center to you.

Write below your commitment to follow-up with at least one “spiritual conversation” in the coming days. With whom? When?

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK ELEVEN

Well, it's here! This week we begin to bring together our thoughts and wonderings and what we've been "hearing" and receiving from GOD. If you haven't heard already, you'll soon hear where we can pick-up the *Reflections Cards* that we will use to share our wonderings and words from GOD.

On the next page you'll see a sample *Reflections Card*, so you might begin thinking about what you want to share. And in case you're not yet sure what to share—or what is appropriate to share—don't worry. That's what we're going to be exploring this week.

In the meantime, our prayer for our congregation this week is the same as the apostle Paul shared with the Christians in Ephesus (near the modern city of Seljuk, Turkey):

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, <sup>15</sup>the Creator of everything in Heaven and on Earth. <sup>16</sup>I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. <sup>17</sup>Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into GOD's love and keep you strong. <sup>18</sup>And may you have the power to understand, as all GOD's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. <sup>19</sup>May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from GOD.

<sup>20</sup>Now all glory to GOD, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. <sup>21</sup> Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

*Ephesians 3.14-21*



## **REFLECTIONS CARD**

Please use this card to share the words, ideas, thoughts, visions, dreams, Bible verses, hymns, songs, pictures, etc. that have come to you as you've taken part in our *VISION QUEST*.

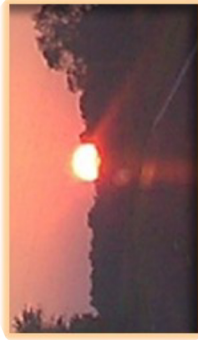
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please submit one thought, idea, etc. per card.**  
**You are welcome to submit as many Cards as necessary.**

Name (OPTIONAL): \_\_\_\_\_

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13.12



# MONDAY

Remember when GOD called out to the boy Samuel who grew up to become one of the greatest priests and prophets of all time, “Samuel ... Samuel!”? Close your eyes and for a moment imagine GOD is calling out to you, using your name. “\_\_\_\_\_!  
\_\_\_\_\_!”

Can you hear HIM? What is GOD saying to you? What is GOD saying to you about our congregation?

Write it down in the space below with no further thought about it.... Again, close your eyes and listen for what GOD wants to say to us through you. Write it down below ... trusting that GOD can and wants to communicate through you. If you're having trouble listening or hearing, return to the *Breath Prayer* we learned at the beginning of this *QUEST*.

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## TUESDAY

It can be hard to believe that GOD can, and wants to, speak through us. It is an undeniable fact, though: no matter how hard we try to deny it! So let's suspend discussion about that today and move on to becoming comfortable with what we could or should share.

Not everything that's come to mind over the past weeks is going to be appropriate to share. This is not the time to be sharing our personal opinions, nor is it the forum to be sharing what "I want" or what "so-and-so wants." Of course, we hope that what GOD wants is what we want; but, alas, that may not necessarily be so.

If you're not sure how to distinguish between your personal desires and those of GOD, apply this test to your jottings and potential sharings:

- Does what I'm thinking about sharing relate to something I've been wanting or had been thinking about prior to praying about it? (If so, journal on it or sit with it in light of the *Acts 2.42-47* passage.)
- Does what I'm thinking about sharing seem to appear "from out of nowhere?" Does it seem a bit far-fetched or even "weird?" Am I worried others might think this is an odd thought? (If so, don't be afraid to share, as long as the idea correlates with loving GOD and others as Jesus loves us and with helping others to know that love.)

**What do You want our congregation—  
Your congregation—to do, God?**

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# WEDNESDAY

Most of us have reservations about sharing, particularly when it comes to sharing what we think we *might* be hearing from GOD. That nagging, “Why would GOD speak to or through me?” can ring loudly in our heads. And how bold is that ... to think that someone is expecting us to share on GOD’s behalf? We may also be concerned that others won’t take us seriously or, worse, might make fun of what we share. There’s a lot of trust involved here. Perhaps we’ve been taught to “keep our mouths shut” when it comes to Church or congregational business. Others of us may feel unworthy or too unknowledgeable to be able to share.

If you have been, or are, reticent to share; please know you are not alone. The Bible is full of folks like us, to name a mere few: Moses (you can read about him in the Older Testament book of Exodus); Jonah (there’s a whole book about his reticence in the Older Testament, actually named after him!); the apostles Peter and Paul (read more about them in the Newer Testament book of Acts).

But also know that when GOD speaks something for us to share, we have to share it (check out Jonah’s book if you don’t believe us - smile!).

What might hold you back from sharing? Write below any reservations you may have about sharing and confess them to GOD as a part of your *repentances* today (might we suggest you make sure you pray a *P’R’A’Y Prayer?*). Know that you—yes *you*—are loved and prized by GOD and that GOD has been, and is, speaking to you. If you need to, ask GOD to give you trust, assurance, and courage to share on His behalf.

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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# THURSDAY

Today, let us find assurance in Jesus' words that we find in the Newer Testament with John's name:

If anyone chooses to do GOD's will, he will find out whether MY teaching comes from GOD or whether I speak on MY own.

*John 7.17*

For further assurance, apply these further questions to what you're wondering comes from GOD:

- Is it consist with what we read in the Bible?
- Is it consistent with WHO Jesus is?
- Will it build or destroy people, the Church, and/or GOD's Kingdom (even if people may feel uneasy about it at first)?

Let Jesus' words be part of our prayers today.

**What do YOU want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## FRIDAY

If GOD's words belong to GOD, we need to caution about getting too attached to them. It's easy—we might say *all too human*—to fall victim to owning the thoughts and words we share.

Not all of us have the best conversation skills (you'll note we said *conversation*, not *communication*). This looms as a growing problem with our societal bent toward fewer meals together as well as more dinners in front of the television; and it's being complicated by the rise of instant messaging and other innovations that help us to talk *to* people rather than converse *with* them. One rule of good conversation is that we allow what we say to be heard and received but not necessarily accepted by those with whom we are conversing. You could say that we *detach* ourselves from our words and ideas, trusting that those with whom we choose to have conversation might have something to add, another facet to explore.

This is a key rule to remember as we bring forward our Reflections this week. What we write on our *Reflections Card* is a *reflection*; it's not a directive and will need to stand the test of *confirmation* ... or spiritual agreement with others in our congregation who have also been engaging this *VISION QUEST*.

Don't let this hold you back, though. Remember, GOD is calling and we are expecting everyone to share! You'll notice, though, that our REFLECTION CARDS have no place for our contact information. We'll be looking for common themes and praying for guidance, wisdom, and clarity when it comes time to look at everything we've brought forward.

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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# SATURDAY

Spend today praying as the SPIRIT leads you and working on what you will share on your *REFLECTIONS CARD*.

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, God?**

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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# LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK TWELVE

This week we continue to share our prayer reflections. If you haven't already submitted your *REFLECTIONS CARD*, don't wait until it's too late (although we realize and respect that the HOLY SPIRIT may be telling you to wait for now). You can submit as many *REFLECTIONS CARDS* as you need to, so you don't have to worry that you may not have written everything you need to. We do ask, however, that you not submit multiple *CARDS* with the same idea over and over again (kind of like stuffing a ballot box - smile).

We enter this week with a prayer for our congregation, drawing again from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to GOD. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the NAME of the LORD Jesus, giving thanks to GOD the FATHER through HIM.

*Colossians 3.15-17*

Join us as we pray for our congregation, for *what* GOD is calling us to do, for how GOD is wanting to use us. Let us pray for spiritual agreement, for courage for our brothers and sisters who haven't shared yet, for GOD's presence to be obvious and overt in each of us and in our congregation. Let us keep praying....



# MONDAY

Wondering and waiting can be scary propositions. Perhaps you've already submitted your *REFLECTIONS CARD*; maybe you're waiting. Maybe you're wondering whether or not you should. Maybe you're wondering—or worried about—what others may be thinking they hear from GOD. What if they're wrong? What if you're wrong?

Breathe.... Breathe.... Breathe....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

Jesus.... Thank YOU....

You don't have to worry. Rest in the words from this week's key passage:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Breathe....

Relax....

Let the peace of Jesus Christ that passes all understanding wash over you....

Be thankful....

Breathe.... Breathe.... Breathe....

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## TUESDAY

This week’s scripture directs us to let “the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly....” How will you encounter Jesus’ words today? What are you reading in scripture? What will you read today?

Before you forget or get side-tracked, pick up your Bible and dwell richly in a teaching from it. If you’re not sure what to read, go back through the previous weeks of this *QUEST* and choose a passage or two. How is Christ speaking to your prayers today?

**What do You want our congregation—  
Your congregation—to do, God?**

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# WEDNESDAY

You may not fancy yourself a teacher or other congregational leader, but you have no less opportunity to teach and reach others. We are called to live out the teachings of Jesus—to be the teachings of Jesus—in both word and deed.

How are your prayers for your *Five Most Wanted* going? With whom are you sharing Jesus’ Tangible Touch? And how do you think GOD wants to tangibly touch people through our congregation?

One of the more dangerous prayers is the prayer, “Use me, GOD.” Are you bold enough to pray it today? If not, why not?

## **What do You want our congregation— YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## THURSDAY

It can be tempting to concentrate more on those within the doors of the church building than on those outside the congregation ... and vice versa. You may remember that ministry is the service we provide *within* the congregation and mission is the service we provide *beyond* the congregation. There's meant to be a balance between the two.

What do you think GOD may be saying about the balance in our congregation? Where do we excel? Where are we falling short? How will we become more fully *who* GOD is calling us to be? Please join us today in praying that we will become all GOD is calling us—is challenging us—to be.

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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## **FRIDAY**

When was the last time you said a psalm or sang a hymn or some other “spiritual song” out of *thanksgiving*? When was the last time you felt thankful? Use the space below to make a *Gratitude List*, a list of what you’re thankful for!

This will likely come in handy when we start to articulate and then live into *what* GOD is calling us to do. Keep praying we’ll be able to keep our focus on GOD and Jesus, remaining open to the HOLY SPIRIT’S working in and through us.

### **GRATITUDE LIST**

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## SATURDAY

In this week's scripture, Paul tells the Colossians to "admonish one another with all wisdom." In his letter to the Ephesians, he rephrases this to direct us to "speak the truth in love" (*Ephesians 4.15*). All this is for one purpose and one purpose only, so that we will become mature in our faith and grow together into the unified Church Jesus calls us to be.

Turn back to the first weeks of this *DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL* and compare your writings to those of the past week or two. How have you grown over the past three months? How have you seen our congregation grow? What would you like GOD to do with you over the *next* three months?

What work do you need to do to be prepared to receive and be part of what GOD is calling our congregation to do?

**What do You want our congregation—  
YOUR congregation—to do, GOD?**

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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# LOOKING FORWARD TO WEEK THIRTEEN

Can you believe we're about to bring this *VISION QUEST PRAYER SERIES* to a close!?! Yep! We've been at it for twelve weeks now.

Whether you're looking forward to getting your life and time back or hope we'll continue to offer opportunities for praying and studying together, we hope you have seen GOD or met Jesus in a new or different way.

This will be a week of review and getting ready for what's next in our congregation ... and for whatever you and GOD determine may be next for you. We've learned a lot and have accomplished a lot over the last three months.

Remember, we have to use what we learn or we most certainly will lose it. Take some time to make some promises to yourself and commit them to GOD and at least one other person (if not the group with whom you've been meeting) and get ready to see what GOD is going to do with us.

And make plans now to join us as we live into Paul's wish:

... be filled with the Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the LORD, <sup>20</sup>always giving thanks to GOD the Father for everything, in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ.

*Ephesians 5.18b-19*

Amen.



# MONDAY

This week’s scripture is very similar to last week’s. We start this final week remembering how important it is for us to stay grounded in GOD’S SPIRIT and to be in community as a congregation, with one another. We remember the importance of keeping GOD first and giving HIM thanks in everything.

What has this *VISION QUEST* taught you about gratitude? For what are you grateful about our congregation? Write below what you’re grateful for, along with any thoughts you may have about gratitude. Does your gratitude surprise you? Are you surprised about what you’re grateful for?

## For what are you grateful?

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# TUESDAY

Go back through your *Most Wanted List*. What opportunities has GOD given you to invite and extend invitations? How did you respond to those opportunities? With whom have you shared the joys and struggles of praying for people who do not yet have a church home or a relationship with GOD (REMEMBER: we all need support in this!)?

What have you learned about yourself and GOD? About GOD's heart for others? How will you keep vigilant and alert for new opportunities and new people to invite?

## Who do You want me to introduce to You, GOD?

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# WEDNESDAY

Don't let this week get past you without checking how well-rounded your prayers are. Again today, we invite you to write your prayer and then see how adept you have become at being a well-rounded pray-er.

## *P<sup>R</sup>A<sup>A</sup>Y Prayer*

Praise and thanksgiving, Repentance, Asking, and Yes-sing

GOD....

I praise and thank You for....

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I am sorry I....

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GOD, please....

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GOD, I will....

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# THURSDAY

We have to ask one more time: have you submitted your *REFLECTIONS CARD* yet? It's time ... time is running out. Sunday is scheduled as the last day to bring our cards to a worship service.

If you are still reticent to submit your *CARD* (or to do anything else—praying, inviting, living into peacefulness, whatever), go back to Wednesday of Week 11 and face-up and fess-up to why you're holding on to whatever it is that keeps you from stepping forward.

Add to those thoughts, these that Moses shared with the Israelites in the Older Testament book Deuteronomy:

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your GOD goes with you; HE will never leave you nor forsake you."

*Deuteronomy 31.6*

## **What holds me back, God?**

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## FRIDAY

Let's wind this week down with one more look at our *PRAYER CHARTS*. What prayers have been left unanswered? What were your biggest surprises? The biggest frustrations?

Who will you share these with? Who will you be sharing in prayer with? Who will be encouraging your praying? Who will you encourage and share in prayer with?

Put a date (or, better, *recurring appointments*) on your calendar to follow through on these details: check your progress and your vigilance and perseverance. Don't leave to chance your praying, the opportunity to thank GOD on a regular basis, and the privilege of sharing your testimonies of what GOD is doing for, in, and through you.

**With whom shall I pray and share, God?**

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## SATURDAY

It's been a privilege to walk with you over the past thirteen weeks. Thank you for being a part of this *QUEST*. Thank you for being part of this congregation. Thank you.

As we wait to hear more about what GOD is calling us to do as a congregation, spend time in the next weeks exploring what GOD is calling *you* to do. If we'll each ask GOD this question on our own behalf, "GOD, why have you created me and who do you need me to be?"; we'll find we're each better prepared to play our part in the *what* of what we are to do as a congregation.

There's a reason GOD has brought each of us to this place, to be part of this congregation. Let's get ready to live into all we, as individuals and as the Body of Christ, have been created to be and do.

Whew-HOOOOOOOOO!

**What do you want *me* to do, GOD?**

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# SUNDAY

What do you want to remember about GOD, Jesus, the HOLY SPIRIT, and/or prayer from this past week?

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What thought, insight, or experience would you like to share with someone else?

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With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share? \_\_\_\_\_

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What will you carry with you into this next week?

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### ***Jeremiah 29.11-13***

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon ME and come and pray to ME, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek ME and find ME when you seek ME with all your heart.

### ***1<sup>ST</sup> Corinthians 12.12-20***

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For we were all baptized by one SPIRIT into one body ... and we were all given the one SPIRIT to drink.

<sup>14</sup>Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But in fact GOD has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as HE wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup>If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many parts, but one body.