



One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say..."

Luke 1:1-2

DEAR READER,

Prayer isn't something we ever perfect. It's something we practice, which means as we do it, as we try this and that, we grow in our ability to communicate with God. This guide is intended to help you in your practice of prayer.

Here's what you can expect each day during Lent:

ON SUNDAYS:

We begin each week with prayers of gratitude.

ON MONDAYS:

We reflect on someone else's thoughts on prayer and pray in response.

ON TUESDAYS:

We pray a Psalm.

ON WEDNESDAYS:

We pray with and for others.

ON THURSDAYS:

We pray a historic, liturgical prayer.

ON FRIDAYS:

We pray in silence and contemplation.

ON SATURDAYS:

We rest and pray as we like.

The back of this guide contains two lists: one for your gratitudes and the other for your prayer requests. We hope this space helps you become more specific in your prayers, and also helps you reflect on God's movement in your life over time.

This book is yours. We were delighted to write this, and even more excited to participate in the journey through Lent with you, as a church.

Many blessings on these next 40 days. We'll see you at Easter!

Your partners in prayer,

Hannah, Pastor, Director of Cornerstone

Alex, Director, Spiritual Formation

Elizabeth, Education Coordinator

WEEK ONE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Research proves that the practice of gratitude actually has the power to rewire our brains to the point where we begin noticing more of the positives and less of the negatives. To start the week during Lent, we're encouraging you to spend a few moments thinking about what you're thankful for. Write your list down in the back of this journal in the section titled "gratitude," on a note in your phone, or even on a scrap piece of paper—the important thing is just that you make a list. Here are two things to keep in mind:

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may
 be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- BE SPECIFIC. For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- DIG DEEP. Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice.

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God specifically for each of the items on your list.

WANT TO TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER?

This week, tell someone how grateful you are for them through a text message, email, or face-to-face conversation. Be specific about why you're grateful for them and if possible, use at least one example.

At the end of the Lenten season, reflect on how these experiences influenced your Sundays and your week as a whole. Are there ways you can incorporate this practice into your routine? What kind of impact might that have on your outlook? How have you noticed your relationship with God change or grow as you make it a habit to thank God each week?

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19 REFLECTION

Each Monday during Lent, we'll borrow from someone else's thoughts on prayer. We will lay it before you, and invite you to reflect on your own practice. Our hope is that by learning how others think about prayer, our prayers will be clarified and strengthened. Let's try it!

"Bear up the hands that hang down, by faith and prayer; support the tottering knees. Have you any days of fasting and prayer? Storm the throne of grace and persevere therein, and mercy will come down."

John Wesley, Founder of Methodism

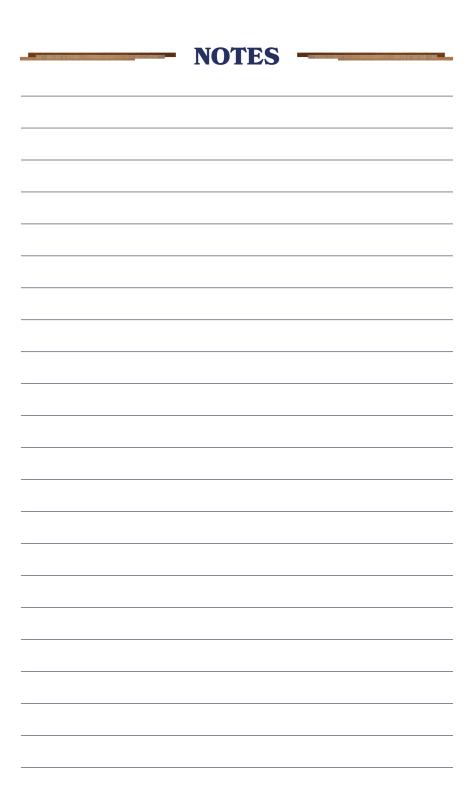
Storm the throne of grace. Do your prayers sound like thunder? John Wesley invites us to boldly pitch our requests to God, with urgency and passion. He assumes our prayer is paired with fasting! I've hesitated to pray with such intensity because it feels risky. What if I plead, and the answer is not what I hoped for? Fear of the outcome is no reason not to pray. In fact, it's a significant reason to pray. If we're afraid to be disappointed by God and therefore hold back in prayer, we are not fully engaged in our relationship with Him.

God is big enough to handle our disappointment. God is big enough to handle thunderous prayers.

Storm the throne of grace, and persevere therein, and mercy will come down.

REFLECTION:

- Whose weary hands and tottering knees are you holding up in prayer?
- Do you pray thunderous prayers? Why or why not?
- Write down your prayer(s) and speak them aloud to God.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 3: ON FEAR

¹LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! ²Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." ³But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. ⁴I call out to the LORD. and he answers me from his holy mountain. ⁵I lie down and sleep: I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. ⁶I will not fear though tens of thousands as sail me on every side. ⁷Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. ⁸From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.

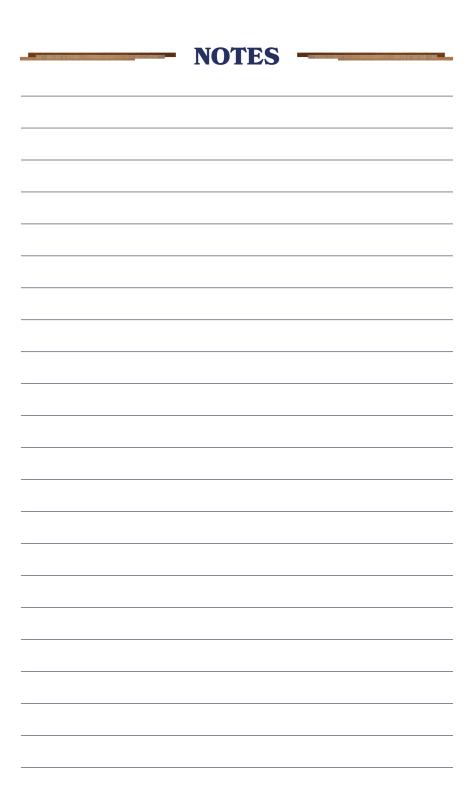
Fear is one of the most basic emotions we feel, and in this psalm, the author, King David, clearly expresses that he is terrified. To give some context, David is on the run. His son has gathered an army and staged a successful coup against him, and David is fleeing for his life. Not only that, but he expresses the anxiety he feels about his identity. Who is he if he is no longer a successful, respected king?

Read through Psalm 3 again, and pay attention to the shift in David's focus in verse 3.

He names the source of his fear, but then he chooses to shift his attention from his circumstances to God's character. He calls God his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head. David is able to end the prayer with confidence not because there is nothing left to fear but because God is right there in the midst of it.

Most of us probably have a very clear source, or perhaps several sources, of fear and anxiety in our lives. Today, let us call out to the One who is also our shield, our glory, and the lifter of our heads:

- Name the fears and anxieties. Dig to the root of what is causing these feelings inside of you and speak them aloud before God.
- Acknowledge God's presence with you. If you struggle to feel His nearness, ask Him to make you aware of His companionship.
- We all struggle at times with placing our confidence and identity in the wrong places, which leaves us feeling afraid and unsteady. Is there anything besides God that you are leaning on to give you a sense of worth and purpose?
- Consider saying to God: "I can't find these things anywhere else but you; help me to put them in their proper place—with you."



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

Ephesians 6:18

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, but we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

This is why, from the earliest days of Christianity, prayer was an essential component of the church's rhythm. In Acts 1, we read that the early disciples "all joined together **constantly in prayer**." Just a chapter later, Acts 2 tells us they "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Following their example, in the back of your journal is a prayer list. Throughout the week, use this space as a way to keep track of the people you are praying for, those who specifically ask for your prayers, and any prayers of your own you'd like to include. Each Wednesday, take at least 15 minutes to pray for each person or item specifically.

This week, recruit a prayer partner to join you in prayer through Lent. This can be a spouse, significant other, small group, friend, family member, or anyone you feel comfortable praying with. Whether you meet in person or over the phone, make an appointment to pray with this person out loud at least once starting next week.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

The short prayer below is known as the **Wesleyan Covenant Prayer**. Though John Wesley likely didn't write it, this prayer certainly played a deep role in his spiritual formation. The Wesleyan Covenant Prayer guides us in offering our full selves to God as we seek to live the way God calls us to live. As you pray this famous prayer, pay attention to what surprises you about the prayer, including the things you maybe wouldn't have thought of on your own.

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt. rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee. exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"Prayer is first of all listening to God. It's openness. God is always speaking; he's always doing something."

Henri J.M. Nouwen, Priest and Theologian

Consider taking ten minutes of silence to be still in a comfortable spot. Try to settle into the space. As distractions arise, let them pass and pay attention once more to the silence.

At the end of these ten minutes, ask God, "Is there anything you're up to in my life that I'm not yet aware of?"

Spend another five minutes "listening" in silence. It's unlikely you'll hear an audible voice, but do you sense any response to the question you asked?

WEEK TWO

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"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 3:17

It's easy to thank God for the things in our life that feel good or give us pleasure. This week, consider some of the challenges or difficult circumstances you're facing. How can we be grateful to God in the midst of these things?

Write your list down in the back of this journal in the section titled "gratitude," on a note in your phone, or even on a scrap piece of paper—the important thing is just that you make a list. Here are two things to keep in mind:

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- BE SPECIFIC. For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're
 grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- DIG DEEP. Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice.

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God specifically for each of the items on your list.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26 REFLECTION

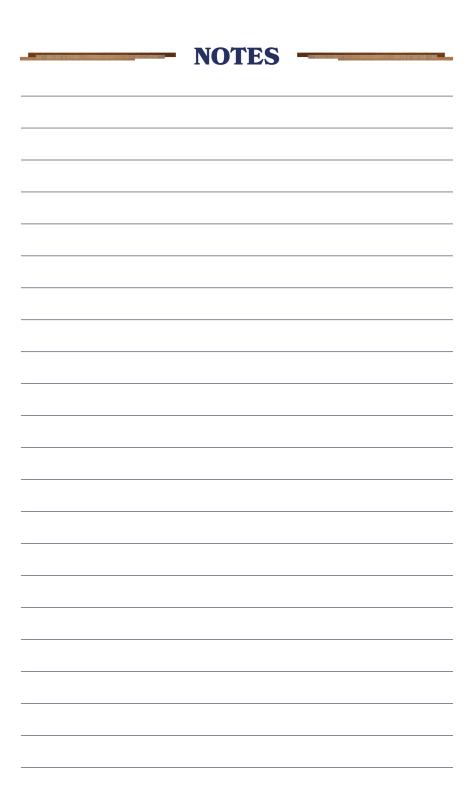
Each Monday during Lent, we'll borrow from someone else's thoughts on prayer. We will lay it before you, and invite you to reflect on your own practice. Our hope is that by learning how others think about prayer, our prayers will be clarified and strengthened. Let's try it!

"Most of my struggles in the Christian life circle around the same two themes: why God doesn't act the way we want God to, and why I don't act the way God wants me to. Prayer is the precise point where those themes converge."

Philip Yancey, Prayer

LET'S SPEND A FEW MOMENTS AT THAT CONVERGENCE POINT TODAY:

- How is it you want God to act?
- How is it you believe God is acting?
- Tell these things to God in prayer. Ask God to help you see Him more clearly.
- How is it you believe God wants you to act?
- How are you actually acting?
- Tell these things to God in prayer. Ask God to help you see yourself more clearly.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 34: ON JOY

¹I will extol the LORD at all times: his praise will always be on my lips. ²I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. ³Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. ⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. ⁵Those who look to him are radiant: their faces are never covered with shame. ⁶This poor man called, and the LORD heard him: he saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him. and he delivers them. ⁸Taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. ⁹Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. ¹¹Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. ¹²Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days. ¹³keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. ¹⁴Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. ¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; ¹⁶but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. ¹⁷The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them: he delivers them from all their troubles. ¹⁸The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ¹⁹The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all: ²⁰he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. ²¹Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. ²²The LORD will rescue his servants: no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

Does the content of the majority of your prayers boil down to "Help me! Help me! Help me!" If so, you certainly aren't the only one. But what if that was what your conversations with your best friends, spouse, or close family members always sounded like? Intimate, healthy relationships also involve statements like:



"THANK YOU! THANK YOU!" "I LOVE _____ ABOUT YOU." "I ADORE YOU BECAUSE YOU DID ."

Yet, many of us find ourselves praying more often when things are going wrong than when they are going right. Make no mistake, God wants your "Help me!" He desires your requests. But when was the last time you prayed because you felt joyful, grateful, excited...?

Read through David's psalm expressing his joy and adoration. What does he glorify the Lord for?

There is always something to be joyful about because of God's goodness. In Luke 19:40, Jesus says that if his followers did not worship God, even the rocks would cry out in praise; let us not be silent today. Psalms of praise like this give articulate words to what the rocks and trees and mountains and seas have been trying to say since the beginning of creation, and today we will join in their song by praying about our joy to God:

- What is bringing you joy today? Tell God about these things. What is making you
 excited? Who are the people that you delight in? Offer Him praise for these blessings.
- What are some qualities or characteristics of the Lord that you love? Can you think of
 examples in your life or those close to you where that characteristic has been on full display?
 Praise God for these things.
- The Scriptures constantly encourage believers to worship and enter into God's gates singing thanksgiving and praise. Take a few minutes to offer God your praise through song—this is a prayerful experience, too! Turn on a song of praise that resonates with you (we recommend Shane and Shane's "Psalm 34") or find a playlist of worship songs of praise on your phone. Sing along and be assured that you are not just raising your voice into the air. There is a person more real than the air you are breathing as you are singing that takes delight in your song, no matter if you are a musical person or not.



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:19-20

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, but we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

In the back of your journal is a prayer list. Use this space as a way to keep track of the people you are praying for, those who specifically ask for your prayers, and any prayers of your own you'd like to include. Spend at least 15 minutes in prayer for the items you've listed. Take time specifically for each person or item on your list.

Now that you have a prayer partner for Lent, make sure to meet with them at least once each week. It can be in person over a cup of coffee or a walk, or you can pray together over the phone—the important thing is praying out loud with another person consistently.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

The Lord's Prayer is arguably the most famous prayer in all of Christendom–It's what Jesus used to teach his followers how and what to pray. The Lord's Prayer brings together two key themes central to the heart of Jesus: the love of God and the love of others. The Lord's Prayer is both an appeal to God, the one who reigns above all, and a reminder of the great family of God we belong to—this is why all of the pronouns are plural! When we pray this prayer in community, God invites us to see those around us who are desperately in need of daily bread, who need our support or encouragement as they face tough circumstances or temptations, as well as those who need our forgiveness. In this way, God invites us to be part of answering the very prayer we are praying.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday of Lent, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"Far from being a mere absence, silence allows the reality of God to stand in the midst of your life. It is like the wind of eternity blowing in your face. Not for nothing does the Psalmist say:

'Be still and know that I am God.'
God does not ordinarily compete for our attention. In silence we come to attend."

Dallas Willard, Author and Theologian

As your prayer practice today, spend fifteen minutes "being still" and knowing that God is God.

Can you simply offer your attention to God during this time?

When distractions arise, ask God if He'd like you to pay attention to them, or if you should you let them fade away.

What is it like for you to sit in silence? Is it awkward? Difficult? A breeze? Why is that?

WEEK THREE

SUNDAY, MARCH 3 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever."

Psalm 136:1

All of us are being influenced by others as we learn and grow. Today, as you think about what you're grateful for, focus on the people you are most grateful for, who have shaped you and encouraged you.

Write your list down in the back of this journal in the section titled "gratitude," on a note in your phone, or even on a scrap piece of paper—the important thing is just that you make a list. Here are two things to keep in mind:

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may
 be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- **BE SPECIFIC.** For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- DIG DEEP. Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice.

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God specifically for each of the items on your list.

MONDAY, MARCH 4 REFLECTION

Each Monday during Lent, we'll borrow from someone else's thoughts on prayer. We will lay it before you, and invite you to reflect on your own practice. Our hope is that by learning how others think about prayer, our own prayers will be clarified and strengthened. Let's try it!

"Communication is essential to relationshipparticularly because asking insists on
vulnerability. When you ask anyone for
anything, you risk rejection or at least
disappointment. Until we ask God for
something, he can't disappoint or surprise us.
We cannot build trust with God without asking.
We can't relate to God if we never ask.
Without asking, God is something less than
a free, relational Being. He is a machine
delivering on our desires, maybe even before
we become conscious of what we want. Asking
is the means by which we build the relationship
with God he designed us to enjoy."

Tyler Staton, Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools

God is our Father. He sees everything going on in the world, big and small. He is not only concerned about war and poverty, but also the conversation that kept you up last night and the anxiety you feel before a meeting. He is our Father, and He loves it when we ask Him for what we want—when we let Him into what we desire.

REFLECTION:

Do you find it difficult to be vulnerable before God? Do you feel pressure to say the right thing or the profound thing? Why do you think that is?

Spend a few minutes today praying for specific needs and wants in your life with this specific challenge in mind: first, pray for the things that seem too small to bother God with, and then, pray for the big things that seem impossible.



TUESDAY, MARCH 5 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 32: ON GUILT

¹Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ²Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. ³When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy on me: my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said. "I will confess my transéressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. ⁶Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. ⁷You are my hiding place; vou will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. 8I will instruct you and teach

you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

If prayer is about relationship, then confession has to be a part of prayer when things go wrong. When you hear the word confession, does that have negative associations for you? Maybe it calls to mind feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame.

Read through Psalm 32 and pay attention to David's experience of confession. Verses 1 and 2 paint an astounding picture of blessedness. In the Bible, blessedness is like the good life, a state of well-being and fulfillment, and this psalm begins by saying that the person who lives the good life is the one who knows they are flawed and in need of forgiveness and is assured that they have it. David is certain that God's response to confession is to forgive and serve as a refuge, certain that God will respond with a show of extravagant grace.

How do you process and pray through experiences of failure before God? Do you avoid it? There is a loving Father in your life who has the power to heal you, and He has already made His definitive statement that He is committed to you, no matter what. Imagine you were to live from that mindset!

As Eugene Peterson puts it, "God does not deal with sin by ridding our lives of it as if it were a germ, or mice in the attic. God does not deal with sin by amputation as if it were a gangrenous leg, leaving us crippled, holiness on a crutch. God deals with sin by forgiving us, and when he forgives us, there is more of us, not less."

With the confidence that you will be forgiven, take a few minutes to reflect on what you might need to confess.

- In the quiet, ask God to reveal things to you and bring to your attention any Latent guilt or remorse the two of you should talk about.
- End with a prayer of confession about whatever came to mind and ask God to forgive you.
 Ask Him to help you experience the joy and confidence that David did. If you need a place to start, pray along with David in his prayer of confession in Psalm 51.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

1 Timothy 2:1-2

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, but we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

In the back of your journal is a prayer list. Use this space as a way to keep track of the people you are praying for, those who specifically ask for your prayers, and any prayers of your own you'd like to include. Spend at least 15 minutes in prayer for the items you've listed. Take time specifically for each person or item on your list.

Don't neglect to meet with your prayer partner this week. If you haven't already, take turns praying out loud together for the people or things on one another's list.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

Before we receive Communion, we join together as one body in the **Prayer of Confession**. As the church, we acknowledge before God and one another that we don't actually have it all together. Repeating these words together is both an act of humility and reconciliation, a reminder of our need for God's endless mercy and grace, and our need to extend mercy and grace to those around us as we seek to love others as God loves us.

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against
you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and what
we have left undone.
We have not loved You with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We justly deserve Your judgment.
For our sake, and the sake of your son,
Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.
Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,
so that we may delight in Your will
and walk in Your ways that lead to glory.
Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday of Lent, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"The assumption of spirituality
is that God is always doing something
before I know it. So the task is not to get
God to do something I think needs to be
done, but to become aware of what God
is doing so that I can respond to it and
participate and take delight in it."

Eugene H. Peterson, Author and Theologian

What questions would you like to ask God about how He is at work in your life?

Write down those questions. Ask them aloud in prayer.

Consider spending at least ten minutes in quietness, open to hearing God "speak."

Do you have a sense of how God might answer your questions?

WEEK FOUR

SUNDAY, MARCH 10 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name." "

Psalm 100:4

Today, spend a few moments reflecting specifically on how you've seen God show up for you this week. Where have you noticed God at work in your life or in the lives of those around you? Continue to curate your gratitude list in the back of your journal or wherever you're keeping it.

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- BE SPECIFIC. For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- **DIG DEEP.** Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice.

As you pray, let God know all the ways you're grateful for Him and what He is up to. Thank God for the ways He has revealed Himself to you, provided for you, and guided you in your faith journey.

MONDAY, MARCH 11 REFLECTION

Each Monday during Lent, we'll borrow from someone else's thoughts on prayer. We will lay it before you, and invite you to reflect on your own practice. Our hope is that by learning how others think about prayer, our prayers will be clarified and strengthened. Let's try it!

"Ultimately, God's greatest answer to prayer is something far different from what we could imagine. It is not what God does for us that demonstrates God's greatest answer to prayer; it is what God does in us. God wants to change us to his liking, not to change the world to our liking."

Gerald Sittser

Taking a moment to be introspective, reflect on what has bubbled to the surface in your prayers over the past few weeks.

- Are there corners of your heart God has been shining light into?
- What has He shown you about the way He sees you, about how dearly He desires your company?
- Are there habits or behaviors He has convicted you about?

In the words of Dallas Willard, "What God gets out of our lives—and, indeed, what we get out of our lives—is simply the person we become."

What kind of person is God making you into?

Take a few moments to jot down some notes about the ways that God is changing you to His liking right now. Then, spend a few minutes in prayer in these two ways. First, surrender to God the desire to make prayer all about your own agendas. Second, ask that God would use your time in prayer to create the change He wants to see; pray that He would bring what He has started within you to completion, molding and shaping you into His image.



TUESDAY, MARCH 12 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 131: ON TRUST

¹O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. ² But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. ³ O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

David knew a thing or two about trusting God. After being anointed as the future king of Israel, he waited around 15 years before he finally took the throne, and these were not peaceful years. He was persecuted and hunted down by his enemies, and yet, during those 15 tumultuous years, David authored this prayer.

Read through Psalm 131 and pay attention to David's metaphor.

For an infant, every need is a crisis, and they will scream and cry, demanding milk until their need is satisfied. If we're honest, that's how most of us come into the journey of faith. We tend to place our hope in the circumstances of our lives, and when that house of cards inevitably topples over, we go to God like a squealing infant, looking to Him for the satisfaction of our most urgently felt needs.

A weaned child, on the other hand, has learned to trust their mother to provide food at the right time.

David describes his soul as the latter. Undoubtedly, David had needs—urgent ones! Undoubtedly, he prayed about them, too. But David could calm and quiet his soul because he trusted God as Provider.

This psalm shows us what it looks like to pray in faith, declaring to God and ourselves that we trust His provision.

This kind of maturation is hard. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Psalm 131 is one of the shortest psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn." But like David, may we learn to calm and quiet our souls, waiting for our Provider who gives us everything we need. He is the God who calls to us:

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even she may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" (Isa. 49:14-16)

- When God shows us His trustworthiness, we respond with our trust. When and how has God shown you His trustworthiness recently? Has your trust increased accordingly?
- David learns to desire God Himself, not just what God could do for Him. Take a moment to rest in God's presence and wonder at His goodness, choosing to spend time in His company.
- "Israel put your hope in the Lord forevermore," David urges. Jesus has given us a living hope through His death and resurrection, which means that our hope is not just optimism; it is a defiant choice to see the messiness of life through the lens of Jesus' victory. Ask Him to help you see the messiness in your own life this way.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another."

Romans 12:15-16

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, but we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

Keep updating your prayer list in the back of this journal. Spend at least 15 minutes in prayer for the items you've listed. Take time specifically for each person or item on your list.

Once you've finished, take time with your partner to pray for each other. Sharing joys and concerns with your partner and then immediately lift them up before God in prayer. Praying outloud with one another, for one another is a powerful way to show our love for others and partner with God in bearing one another's burdens.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

The Jesus Prayer is a very brief prayer used by some of the earliest followers of Jesus. Its roots can be traced back through the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and comes from the words of the Tax Collector in Luke 18:13 who beseaches God for mercy. Because it is such a short prayer, it's often used as a form of contemplative or meditative prayer, sometimes using prayer beads—the prayer is repeated successively with each bead in the strand. These kinds of contemplative prayers are often used as a way to cultivate an inner stillness and broader awareness to God's presence.

Before you pray, take a few deep breaths to center yourself and quiet your mind. As you repeat the first part of the prayer (Lord Jesus Christ), take a deep breath in. Then, as you release your breath, utter the next phrase (Son of God). Repeat this same process for the final two phrases, as outlined below.

(Breathe in)
Lord Jesus Christ,

(Breathe out)
Son of God,

(Breathe in) have mercy on me,

(Breathe out)
a sinner.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"Listening prayer is an act of surrender, laying down our own agendas and desires to hear what God wants to say to us."

Richard Foster

Begin by getting in a comfortable spot. Take a few deep breaths as you settle into your moment of silence. With any thoughts or distractions that arise, acknowledge them and allow them to pass.

Now, for at least 15 minutes, surrender to the silence-no agenda, no expectations or questions, just your presence before the Almighty God. Even though it may feel awkward or difficult to stay in the moment, try to embrace the vulnerability of surrender and allow God to guide the moment.

Before you leave the stillness, spend a moment thanking God for the gift of His presence.

WEEK FIVE

SUNDAY, MARCH 17 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

Colossians 2:6-7

Continue creating your list of gratitudes in the back of this journal or wherever you are keeping them. The same rules as in previous weeks apply.

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may
 be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- BE SPECIFIC. For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're
 grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- **DIG DEEP.** Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice.

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God specifically for each of the items on your list.

This week, go a step further. Tell someone how grateful you are for them through a text message, email, or face-to-face conversation. Be specific about why you're grateful for them and if possible, use at least one example.

MONDAY, MARCH 18 REFLECTION

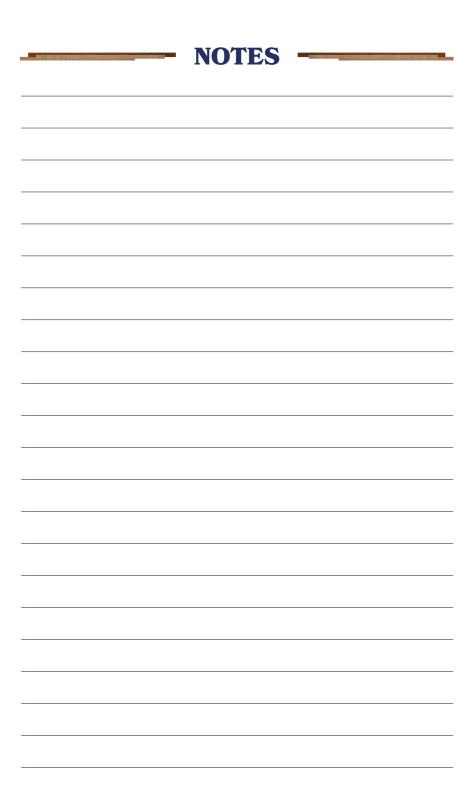
"It is better to come to God with sharp words than to remain distant from him, never voicing our doubts and disappointments.

Better to rage at the Creator than to smolder in polite devotion. God did not smite the psalmist. Through the Psalms, he dares us to speak to him bluntly."

Tish Harrison Warren, Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep

REFLECTION:

What would you say in prayer if you were being completely honest with God today? Write that prayer, or speak it aloud.



TUESDAY, MARCH 19 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 73: ON DOUBT

¹Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. ³For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. ⁵They are free from common human burdens: they are not plagued by human ills. ⁶Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. ⁷From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. ⁸They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. ⁹Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. ¹⁰Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.

¹¹They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?" ¹²This is what the wicked are like always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. ¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. ¹⁵If I had spoken out like that, I would have betraved your children. ¹⁶When I tried to understand all this. it troubled me deeply ¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. ¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground; vou cast them down to ruin. ¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! ²⁰They are like a dream when one awakes: when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. ²¹When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, ²²I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. ²³Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?

And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

²⁷Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

²⁸But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

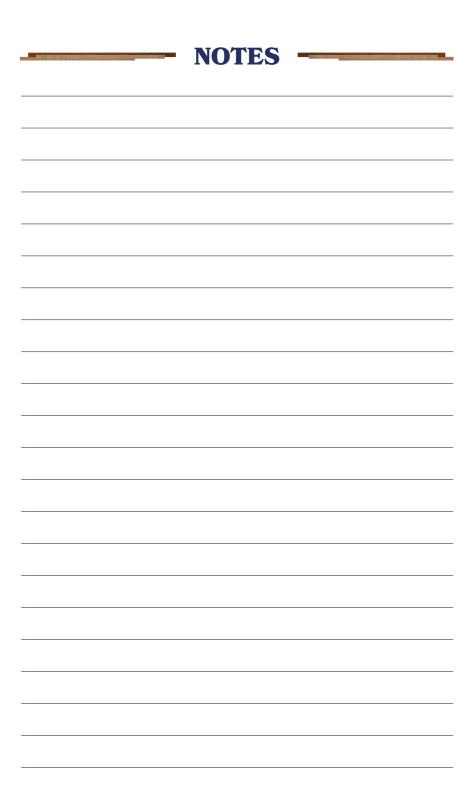
Wouldn't it be wonderful if our faith was always unwavering, our vision of God always clear? Unfortunately, it isn't always so. In some Christian circles, doubt is a bad word. Maybe you have found yourself in some of them. Yet this psalm gives us words to pray through our doubt! The psalmist never expressly uses the word "doubt," but he depicts it with a powerful image: doubt during the spiritual journey is like losing your foothold, like slipping while climbing a rock face. Let yourself sit with that image.

Read through Psalm 73 and note how the psalmist interacts with his doubts. He is raging against injustice and questioning whether God is good and whether following Him is worth it. Maybe you can relate to that. This is a bold, honest prayer, and for him, this moment of doubt became a moment of growth.

Did you ever have growing pains as a kid, the ones that would wake you up in the middle of the night because your legs or knees were sore? This psalmist seems to be going through spiritual growing pains, as if his faith is being stretched to catch up with his experiences of the world. We all have moments when our views of the world and visions we have for our lives are rocked. What do you do when what you say you believe is shaken by something you experience?

If this psalm teaches you anything, let it be this: moments of doubt are precisely the moments to press in. Instead of suppressing, hiding, or turning away from God, let us follow the example of the psalmist and run into God's presence (v. 17). Let our cry to God be like one father who cried out to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

- Are you experiencing growing pains? Where does it feel like you are being stretched?
 Can you name those places where you feel unresolved tension or uncertainty about what God is doing and speak honestly about them in prayer?
- What do you need in this time of stretching? Consider whether there is a way that a trusted friend or pastor could come alongside you.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."

Romans 8:26

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, but we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

Keep updating your prayer list in the back of this journal. Spend at least 15 minutes in prayer for the items you've listed. Take time specifically for each person or item on your list.

With your partner, talk about how the experience of praying with someone else is going.

- What prayers have you seen answered?
- What are you still hoping for in prayer?
- Do you feel more comfortable praying with someone else now than when you first began?

THURSDAY, MARCH 21 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

Written by Reinhold Niebuhr, a 20th Century American Theologian, The Serenity Prayer is a favorite in support groups around the world. The prayer is an easy-to-remember, yet profound invitation to both acknowledge your weakness and petition God for strength. This simple prayer has become a source of wisdom, peace, and strength for countless people during some of the darkest moments in their lives.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is. not as I would have it: trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday of Lent, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us, choosing gratitude until we are grateful, and praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise."

Father Richard Rohr, Author and Theologian

Consider spending fifteen minutes in prayer today, spent roughly in the following way:

- 5 MINUTES OF BECOMING SILENT. Or as long as it takes for your thoughts to feel "silenced." As thoughts come, acknowledge them and set them aside.
- 5 MINUTES OF BEING SILENT. This may feel awkward, that's okay. Try to be still and rest in God's presence.
- 5 MINUTES OF PRAISE. Tell God what you admire about Him. Offer him praise for what He has done.

WEEK SIX

SUNDAY, MARCH 24 PRACTICING GRATITUDE

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Philippians 4:6

Continue to curate your gratitude list in the back of this journal or wherever you're keeping it. Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God specifically for each of the items on your list. Then, take a few moments today to read through your list from start to finish. What stands out to you about your list? Are there any surprises you didn't expect to show up on your list?

- NO REPEATS. Try to keep your list unique from week to week. This may be challenging toward the end of the month, but don't be afraid to get creative!
- BE SPECIFIC. For example, don't just list a person's name, share why you're
 grateful for that person or what they've done to support you.
- DIG DEEP. Try to steer away from the obvious or easy answers. Spend some time asking God to show you things you may not initially notice. Now that we've reached the final week of Lent, reflect on how these experiences influenced your Sundays and your week as a whole.
- Are there ways you can incorporate this practice into your routine?
 What kind of impact might that have on your outlook?
- How have you noticed your relationship with God change or grow as you
 make it a habit to thank God each week?

MONDAY, MARCH 25 REFLECTION

"If we can't say "thy will be done" from the bottom of our hearts, we will never know any peace. We will feel compelled to try to control people and control our environment and make things the way we believe they ought to be."

Tim Keller, Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God

This is Holy Week. Over the next few days, we remember how Jesus yielded to His Father in heaven, as he walked toward death on earth.

Jesus could have staged a rebellion, marshaled the crowds, and taken the throne. Instead, here's what happened:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

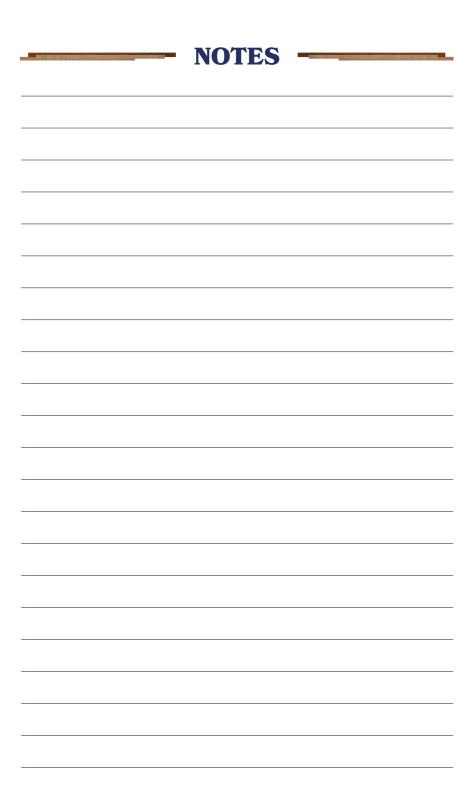
REFLECTION:

Tim Keller suggests that learning to pray, "Thy will be done," is the secret to experiencing peace, regardless of our circumstances. I wonder, do we trust God enough to unclench our fists and offer our lives to him?

Are there people or circumstances you are trying to control? Imagine holding those things in your hands. Now squeeze tightly.

Now open your hands, and speak to God: "Not my will, but thy will be done." Practice this several times.

What does it feel like to surrender your will to His will today?



TUESDAY, MARCH 26 PRAYING THE PSALMS

For thousands of years, the Psalms have given language to the prayers of God's people, including Jesus. They are words God gives us to speak to Him about our experiences and emotions. Each week, we will focus on a psalm that evokes a different emotion, paying attention to what it can teach us about what it looks like to pray through that honestly and wholeheartedly.

PSALM 32: ON PAIN

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? ²My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. ³Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One: you are the one Israel praises. ⁴In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. ⁵To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. ⁶But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. ⁷All who see me mock me: they hurl insults, shaking their heads. 8"He trusts in the LORD," they say, "let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." ⁹Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

¹⁰From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. ¹²Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. ¹⁵My mouth is dried up like a potsherd. and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. ¹⁷All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. ¹⁹But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly o help me. ²⁰Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. ²¹Rescue me from the mouth of the lions: save me from the horns of the wild oxen. ²²I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ²⁴For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. ²⁵From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. ²⁶The poor will eat and be satisfied: those who seek the LORD will praise him may your hearts live forever! ²⁷All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD. and all the families of the nations will bow down before him. ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ²⁹All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—those who cannot keep themselves alive. ³⁰Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

There is a tension that most of us grapple with during our walk with God, and it is this: we believe that God is good and bent on healing the world, and yet, we experience and witness pain, suffering, and evil. How do we hold these things together? The Psalms don't solve this problem for us intellectually, but David does give us a powerful example here of what it looks like to move through suffering with God.

What do your prayers sound like when you are experiencing suffering or witnessing it in the world around you?

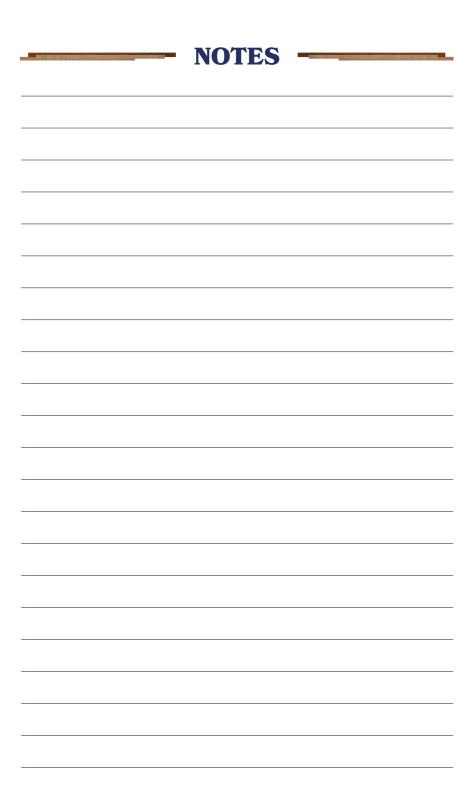
Read through Psalm 22 and consider whether David might have a different focus when he talks to God about his pain.

You might have noticed that David's requests of God are a small portion of the prayer. He does ask God for deliverance, but the entire first half of the psalm is dedicated to telling God what this feels like for David. And he doesn't mince his words!

This psalm shows us the language of lament and teaches us that protesting to God about the horrors that take place in our world is a crucially important habit. It is a habit that Jesus Himself adopted, and if you recognize the first verse of the psalm, it is because this was one of the scriptures Jesus meditated on as He hung on the cross. He chose these words to describe His agony.

As we continue through Holy Week and contemplate the brokenness within us and within humanity that Jesus died for, let us practice this language of lament:

- Consider what places of pain you want God to pay attention to. These can be in your own life, in the lives of those you love, or in the world around you.
 Name what is wrong and what is out of order.
- We often need help to process the twisty misalignment that happens inside of us when we experience pain. What does it feel like to experience that suffering or witness it? Tell Him about it. What emotions arise within you? Ask Him to help you untangle the knots and heal what you make visible to Him.
- Take a moment to rest in the presence of the One who suffered for you and who understands your pain.
- Not only did Jesus quote this Psalm on the cross, but He also fulfilled it (v. 31).
 As we look forward to Easter weekend, ask Jesus to renew your hope in the victory He has already won and the work He will do in the future.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27 PRAYING IN COMMUNITY

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2

There's something powerful that happens when we join with others in prayer. Not only do we get the opportunity to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and celebrate with others, we also get to witness the ways God answers the prayers of our communities. Nothing bonds a community like the vulnerability and honesty of sharing our deepest longings and desires with one another.

Keep track of any updates this week to your prayer list at the back of this journal. Take a moment to reflect on your own how you've seen God move through keeping an intentional list and space to pray with and for others. What surprised you about the experience? What made you uncomfortable? How can you continue to weave this practice into your day-to-day rhythm?

As you meet with your prayer partner, decide whether you'd like to continue meeting together and praying with one another even beyond the Lenten season.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28 LITURGY

Just as we're able to borrow the thoughts of others to deepen our understanding of prayer, we can also draw on the prayers of others to enrich our prayer life. This is what liturgy is. When we don't know what to say or don't have the words, we turn to the familiar prayers that Christians have relied on for generations to give shape to their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In this way, liturgy is both communal and an act of worship. We need liturgies like these because often they push us to pray for things we wouldn't normally pray for.

As a Jewish man, Jesus would have prayed the Shema twice each day, in the morning and the evening. Amid a world filled with diverse gods and god-like rulers, the Shema was an anchor for Israel, reminding them that the God they served was One God, above all. And that God requires nothing less of us than our everything. The Shema calls us to devote our entire being to God-our emotions, desires, decisions, physical being, our strengths, and our limitations. As you echo the prayer of Jesus and countless others today, repeat them until they become familiar to you. Meditate as you pray on what it means for God to be Lord of your life and for you to love him with your whole heart, soul, and strength.

Hear O Israel,
the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.
And as for you, you shall love
the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your strength.
Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 29 LISTENING PRAYER

If prayer is a conversation, we must practice listening to what our conversation partner has to say. Listening to others happens most naturally when we are quiet and curious. The same is true of listening to God. Each Friday of Lent, we'll provide you with a brief thought, and prompt you to spend a chunk of time in silence, curious about what God might say to you.

"For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation."

Psalm 62:1

Today is Good Friday, the day we remember that Jesus suffered an agonizing death on the cross. We invite you to spend your silence like this:

- Spend 5 minutes in silence to quiet your mind.
- Spend 5 minutes reading Matthew 26:36-27:61.
- Spend 5 minutes in silence, reflecting on what you read.
- What is your soul "waiting" for?
- How might God alone offer your "salvation?"

PRACTICING GRATITUDE

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