

May 25 2020 (click for audio)

This week we will conclude our month-long How to Pray series by exploring Spiritual Warfare; applying the power of prayer to the battles we face both personally and nationally at this difficult time.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

And so, as I become aware of Your presence in this place and time, open my eyes to perceive You, realign my mind to believe You, and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the vigilance of God's love for me today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 121:

*I look up to the mountains—
does my help come from there?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth!
He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
The Lord himself watches over you!
The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.
The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
The Lord keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,
both now and forever.
Psalm 121:1-8*

Pause and pray

Today I begin a three-day journey exploring and applying the apostle Paul's vivid depiction of spiritual warfare in Ephesians chapter 6...

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of

evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done every thing, to stand.

Ephesians 6:11-13

The quiet, reflective approach to prayer which we enjoy in Lectio 365 might perhaps seem at odds with the militancy of spiritual warfare, but Jesus modeled both. His ministry began with forty days of quiet prayer in the wilderness which turned into intense spiritual combat. The Desert Fathers and Mothers of the Third Century AD similarly wrestled against the world, the flesh and the devil in the wilderness. And here in this passage, the apostle Paul emphatically reminds us that we are engaged in a cosmic battle.

‘There is no neutral ground in the universe,’ says C.S. Lewis. ‘Every square inch, every split second, is claimed and counterclaimed by Satan.’*

*C.S. Lewis, cited in *How to Pray*, Pete Greig p173

Ask

Lord, I freely confess that my worldview is probably shaped more by materialism than scripture. Open my eyes, like Elisha’s servant, to perceive the angelic realm encamped around (2 Kings 6:17). Make me ‘alert and of sober mind’, like the apostle Peter who said that ‘the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’ (1 Peter 5:8). Give me the gift of spiritual discernment (1 Cor.12:10).

Pause and pray

Thinking now about an event in the current news cycle, I ask You, Holy Spirit, to help me discern the underlying spiritual dynamics at play. Show me the enemy’s hand and how to stand against him now in prayer.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to Ephesians 6, I picture the apostle Paul writing these words whilst imprisoned in Rome, surreptitiously studying his guard and meditating on the spiritual significance of each piece of armor the soldier is wearing...

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done every thing, to stand.

Ephesians 6:11-13

Since ‘there is no neutral ground in the universe’, as C.S. Lewis says, there can be no neutral people. Every one of us must pick a side. No one gets to be a conscientious objector. We are all called, in the words of the musician Bruce Cockburn, to ‘kick at the darkness ’til it bleeds daylight’**

** Bruce Cockburn, ‘Lovers in a Dangerous Time’, from the album *Stealing Fire* (True North, Gold Mountain, A&M, 1984).

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

God, I pick a side. I submit myself again to You today. I take a stand against Satan's subtle temptations and outright attacks, confident that, as the apostle James says, when I resist the devil he must surely flee (James 4:7).

And so I step into the coming day with confidence, 'convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate [me] from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus [my] Lord.' (Romans 8:37 – 39).

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 26 2020 (click for audio)

On Feast Days we celebrate the lives of heroes of faith, whose witness embodies one or more of the six practices at the heart of Lectio 365. These practices are: Prayer and Creativity, Justice and Hospitality, Learning and Mission.

Today we are thanking God for the extraordinary example of Zinzendorf, Godfather of the modern missions movement, and leader of the Moravian 24-7 Prayer meeting at Herrnhut, Germany.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Words of Approach

'Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.' (Hebrew 12:1-2a)

Rejoice and Reflect

I rejoice today in the words of a hymn written by Zinzendorf himself, and translated into English by his protégé John Wesley.

*Jesus, your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress!
mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed with joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in that great day,
and none condemn me, try who may:
fully absolved through Christ I am from sin and fear,
from guilt and shame.*

*This stainless robe its beauty wears
when all else fades with passing years;
no age can change its glorious hue
the robe of Christ is ever new.*

*O let the dead now hear your voice,
let those once lost in sin rejoice!
their beauty this, their glorious dress:*

Jesus, your blood and righteousness.

'Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit', Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700 - 1760) tr. John Wesley (1703 – 1791)

Pause and pray

It was on this day in the year 1700 that Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was born into an aristocratic family in modern-day Germany. His radical faith in later life would change the course of

history. He was to become a hero for the modern missions movement, the global prayer movement and the ecumenical movement to this day. What's more, the Methodist and Moravian denominations, the Salvation Army, the 24-7 Prayer movement and the Order of the Mustard Seed all owe their existence in human terms to Count Zinzendorf's trail-blazing leadership. His life motto was this: "I have one passion: it is Jesus. Only Jesus."

Zinzendorf wrote some 2000 hymns - about one a week - throughout his adult life. He reminds me to keep my eyes fixed firmly on Jesus. Not to get distracted or over-complicated. And certainly not to be ashamed of a lifelong, single-minded passion for the Lord.

In many ways the defining moment in Zinzendorf's life, and certainly the one that gave impetus and form to his other achievements, was the day he and his school friends agreed to form the Order of the Mustard Seed. Together they vowed three things: to be true to Christ, to be kind to people and to take the gospel to the nations. You've probably noticed how these three priorities keep cropping up in Lectio 365.

In his book, *The Lord of the Ring*, Phil Anderson points out that 'the image of the Mustard Seed comes straight from the Bible. Jesus told his followers that the kingdom of God would be like a mustard seed, starting invisibly small but growing to become a great tree. He also challenged them that if they had faith, "even as small as a mustard seed", they could tell a mountain to go jump in the sea and it would obey them.'*

The metaphor of the mustard seed reminds me today not to despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10). The tiny choices I make, the prayers that sometimes seem so inconsequential, the promises that feel so fragile, a small group of friends, such small seeds can grow to change the world.

*Phil Anderson, *Lord of the Ring: In Search of Count von Zinzendorf* (Gospel Light Publications, 2007) p33

Ask

Thinking now of two small things I do for the Lord that may seem mundane, hidden or even inconsequential, I hold one in each hand and offer them to Him, asking the Lord to multiply and make them grow.

Pause and pray

2000 years since Jesus gave the Great Commission, and 300 since Zinzendorf started sending out missionaries, it is estimated that one quarter of the world's population remains unreached by the gospel.

I 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his (most neglected) harvest fields' (Matt.9:38).

Pause and pray

Yield

It was because Zinzendorf had committed himself to kindness, that he agreed to allow refugees from Moravia to build a village called Herrnhut on his country estate.

And it was because he had promised to be true to Christ that Zinzendorf called his bickering Moravian tenants together to repent of their divisions on 13th August 1727. As they did so, the

Spirit of God fell, detonating a 24-7 prayer meeting which would continue without a break, non-stop, night-and-day for more than 100 years.

Zinzendorf's third vow was to take the gospel to the nations and so, after 5 years of 24-7 prayer, he began sending out missionaries to lands where the Gospel had never yet been preached. Shot out like rockets from that white-hot furnace of prayer, Moravian missionaries were the first to take the Good News of Jesus to many people at vast personal cost.

It was at a Moravian Bible study in London that John Wesley's 'heart was strangely warmed' triggering the Great Awakening that changed the course of British history and launched Methodism.

When two Moravian missionaries set sail for the Danish West Indies, fully prepared to sell themselves into slavery if necessary to reach the slaves working on the plantations there, they cried out across the water to those weeping at the dockside: 'That the Lamb May Receive the Reward for the Blood That he shed!'

I am deeply stirred by the sheer courage and sacrifice of those penniless Moravian missionaries - challenged to share the Good News of Jesus with greater confidence and to pay a greater price that 'the Lamb may receive the reward for the blood that he shed.'

***Cited in Pete Greig, Dirty Glory (Hodder and Stoughton 2018) p189*

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

I yield to You today, Lord Jesus, realigning my priorities to be true to You, asking You to help me be kind and not harsh to those I meet, and committing myself afresh to play whatever part I can this week in the fulfillment of Your Great Commission.

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 27 2020 (click for audio)

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

And so, as I become aware of Your presence in this place and time, open my eyes to perceive You, realign my mind to believe You, and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the assurance of God's promises and purposes for my life today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 138:

*I give you thanks, O Lord, with all my heart;
I will sing your praises before the gods.
I bow before your holy Temple as I worship.
I praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness;
for your promises are backed
by all the honor of your name.
As soon as I pray, you answer me;
you encourage me by giving me strength.
Though I am surrounded by troubles,
you will protect me from the anger of my enemies.
You reach out your hand,
and the power of your right hand saves me.
The Lord will work out his plans for my life - for your faithful love, O Lord, endures for ever.
Don't abandon me, for you made me.
Psalm 138:1-3,7-8*

Pause and pray

Today I return to Paul's picture of spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, imagining each item worn by a burly Roman soldier charged with guarding Paul as he writes these famous words...

*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
Ephesians 6:14 – 17*

'The only piece of military hardware with which we can mount an attack is the word of God. No spears. No flaming arrows. No battering rams. Just the Bible. Which is precisely how we see Jesus fighting the Enemy in the wilderness. He counters every temptation thrown at him with an

opposing verse from the Bible because, as the writer of Hebrews says, “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.” The sword that Paul is describing here is the gladius, from which we get our word gladiator. It was a short blade, between 45 and 68 centimeters long, used by Roman legionaries for close military combat. We are to wield the word of God dexterously and forcefully, says Paul, in hand-to-hand combat with the Enemy of our souls.’*

*Pete Greig, *How to Pray* p186

Ask

Recalling one of the Bible verses that is particularly meaningful to me, I take a little time to ‘wield it’ like a sword in prayer, applying it specifically and forcefully to the challenges of my present situation.

Pause and pray

1 in 5 people today are still awaiting a Bible in their own heart-language (according to Wycliffe Bible Translators). I take time now to pray for those sowing their lives into bible translation so that the gospel can be preached to every tongue and tribe and nation. Let Your Word run swiftly, Lord, across the earth and be glorified, in the name of Jesus (Psalm 147:15).

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:14 – 17

I once worked in a particularly challenging situation. It actually felt spiritually dark. Every day on my way into work I would carefully put on the armor of Christ and it made a profound difference. Imagining myself putting on the helmet of salvation, I would ask God to guard my mind and thinking. Donning the breastplate I would pray protection upon my heart and relationships. Buckling truth around my waist I would seek integrity in my sexuality. Picking up the shield of faith I would ask the Lord to cover me from targeted attacks and temptations. Slipping on the shoes of the gospel, I would ask for specific opportunities to share my faith. And picking up the Sword of the Spirit, I would weaponize a promise from the Bible by memorizing it for the day.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

A Prayer of St Patrick

*I bind unto myself today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.
Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger*

Closing Prayer

*Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen.*

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 28 2020 (click for audio)

This week we are exploring the armor of God, seeking to stand more effectively against the world, the flesh and the devil in the name of Jesus through the power of prayer.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

And so, as I become aware of Your presence in this place and time, open my eyes to perceive You, realign my mind to believe You, and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice today because God is my safe place in a scary world, and so I join with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 59:

*As for me, I will sing about your power.
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.
For you have been my refuge,
a place of safety when I am in distress.
O my Strength, to you I sing praises,
for you, O God, are my refuge,
the God who shows me unfailing love.
Psalm 59:16-17*

Pause and pray

Today I join the apostle Paul once again in his prison cell where he is exhorting me to pray in a very particular way:

*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. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.
Ephesians 6:18-20*

Paul's greatest prayer request is not to be released from his chains but to be bold in preaching the gospel. He understands that 'The greatest act of spiritual warfare in the world is when I lead someone into a relationship with Jesus Christ. I will never win a greater victory! It is ultimately "by the blood of the Lamb and the word of [my] testimony" that I overcome the Enemy. There is nothing he fears more. I must view the word of God, therefore, not just as a sword with which to fight, but also as the shoes in which I march into enemy territory proclaiming the good news of gospel liberation that its citizens have been longing to hear.'*

* Pete Greig, *How to Pray* p188

Ask

Thinking about the people I will meet in the coming day, I ask you, Lord, that 'words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel... as I should.'

Pause and pray

In another of his letters, the apostle Paul says that 'the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel.' (2 Cor. 4:4) This is why I must pray as well as preach!

And so, picturing someone who doesn't yet know Jesus, I command their blind eyes to be opened, in the name of Jesus, and ask for an opportunity to share the good news with them, this week.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I pay attention to the number of times Paul repeats the little word 'all' in these few verses...

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. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Ephesians 6:18-20

Paul commands me to pray *all* the time, with *all* kinds of prayers, for *all* of the saints. Not just sometimes, with one kind of prayer, for a few of the saints. There are all kinds of ways to pray - some of which we have explored this month. It's like a toolbox or a menu. And I am expected to pray for all Christians everywhere - especially the ones I don't like!

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

'I hear the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I say, 'Here am I. Send me!' (Isaiah 6:8)

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that in sending me out into the world to proclaim your Good News you promise to be by my side every step of the way, saying 'Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:20)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 29 2020 (click for audio)

This week we have been exploring different aspects of Spiritual Warfare, applying the power of prayer to the serious attacks and temptations we are all facing at this time.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

And so, as I become aware of Your presence in this place and time, open my eyes to perceive You, realign my mind to believe You, and reawaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice alongside the whole of God's creation today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 148:

*Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens!
Praise him from the skies!
Praise him, all his angels!
Praise him, all the armies of heaven!
Praise him, sun and moon!
Praise him, all you twinkling stars!
Praise him, skies above!
Praise him, vapors high above the clouds!
Let every created thing give praise to the Lord
Psalm 148:1-5*

Pause and pray

We turn today to one of the most inspiring and reassuring passages about prayer in the entire Bible...

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. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:26 – 28

As a little boy, our son Danny would often grip big, wax crayons in his chubby little fist to draw on any scrap of paper he could find. "Daddy," he said one day, handing me his latest masterpiece, "look what I wrote." "Wow!" I said, as if he'd knocked off the first page of Macbeth. "Well done, Danny. That's so clever! You're writing so beautifully."

“Wrong way up, silly,” he replied.... [Then] he uttered two words that stopped my heart: “Read it!”

...I stared in despair at the little face in front of me and suddenly knew exactly what to do. His scribbles remained incomprehensible, but his face was an open book. I knew its every wrinkle, contour and nuance, its every fleeting mood. It told me more eloquently than poetry and prose the kind of day he’d had, how he was feeling, what he’d eaten for dinner, and which weird little obsessions were currently buzzing around his head like bluebottles in a jar. Returning to the piece of paper I cleared my throat and began to read aloud...

Our Father in heaven doesn’t get distracted by our scribbled words and squiggled thoughts. He isn’t impressed by the dictionaries and lectionaries we hurl at the sky. Instead, he explores our hearts with infinite affection to discern the kind of day we’ve had, the way we are really feeling and the weird little obsessions buzzing around our heads like bluebottles in a jar. “God’s ear hears the heart’s voice,” said Augustine in his commentary on Psalm 148, [which we read at the start of today’s Lectio] “We do not know what we ought to pray for,” agrees the Apostle Paul in this passage, “but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And [the Father] who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit.”*

*Pete Greig, *How to Pray*, p53-55

Ask

Sitting quietly (surrendering my scribbled prayers) I use the simple words of someone else - the 17th century writer François Fénelon - to express the cry of my own heart now:

*‘Lord, help me not to worry about the words, but address you with the language of the heart . . . I simply present myself to you; I open my heart to you . . . Teach me to pray. Amen.’***

** François Fénelon, cited, Pete Greig, *How to Pray*, p55

Pause and pray

I am now going to try interceding in the way that the Holy Spirit does - with ‘wordless groans’. Thinking of a person who is currently heartbroken I lift them to the Lord with a deep sigh, a groan or even with tears. And waiting in this way, I simply hold them before the Father who loves them without feeling the need to use words.

Pause and pray

Yield

As I return to the passage, I open my ears to hear Your Word, and my heart to yield to Your will once again.

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. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.’

Romans 8:26 – 28

The Quaker educator Thomas Kelly captured the tender pain of intercessory prayer described in these verses like this: ‘We are quickened to a divine but painful concern for the world. [God]

plucks the world out of our hearts, loosening the chains of attachment. And He hurls the world into our hearts, where we and He together carry it in infinitely tender love.'***

***Douglas V Steere, *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings*, p295

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

Lord, my instinct is to avoid pain; to protect and isolate myself as much as possible from the suffering all around. But I yield today to Your infinitely tender love, choosing instead to care about other people's pain and to carry it in my heart as You do in Yours - with sighs and groans and longing.

Thank you Lord that whenever I get close enough to others to carry their burdens, You come even closer to me and carry mine, for - as the psalmist says - "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Ps. 34:18)

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 30 2020 (click for audio)

Together we've explored centering, adoration, petition, intercession, listening to God, confession, unanswered prayer and spiritual warfare. I hope you've found it helpful.

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Pause and pray

Prayer of Approach

And so, as I become aware of Your presence in this place and time, open my eyes to perceive You, realign my mind to believe You, and awaken my heart to receive You, now and throughout the day to come.

Rejoice and Reflect

I choose to rejoice in the Lord with all that I am today, joining with the ancient praise of all God's people in the words of Psalm 104:

*May the glory of the Lord continue forever!
The Lord takes pleasure in all he has made!
The earth trembles at his glance;
the mountains smoke at his touch.
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.
I will praise my God to my last breath!
May all my thoughts be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.
Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth;
let the wicked disappear forever.
Let all that I am praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!
Psalm 104:31-35*

Pause and pray

We conclude this series today with the pre-eminent prayer, given us by Jesus himself, in response to the very question we've been asking: 'Lord, teach us to pray.'...

*This, then, is how you should pray:
'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,*

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

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus portrays prayer as both *communication* and *communion*. As asking but also as becoming. There is wrestling (Your kingdom come... lead us not... deliver us) but also resting in the Father's love, protection and provision. We see that the power of prayer is only partially measurable in miracles because the greatest miracle is not when the world is changed in some way by our prayers, but when we ourselves discover that we are loved and that is all we will ever truly need. The hallowing of God's name, the coming of his Kingdom begins in me, and becomes in me an answer to the prayers of the world.

Ask

Are there ways in which my prayer life has grown and gone deeper over recent weeks? I take time now to thank You Lord for the things You are showing me and the ways You are growing me in my relationship with You.

Pause and pray

Recognizing that the Lord's prayer is plural, I ask You Father to deepen the desire for Your presence and power in my local church. Naming particular leaders known to me, I ask You to set their hearts ablaze with a new passion and to make us a House of Prayer for all nations.

Pause and pray

Yield

Since the very earliest days of the Church, the Lord's prayer has concluded with a beautiful doxology written by King David. Listen out for the familiar lines in this ancient hymn of praise...

David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

*'Praise be to you, Lord,
the God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.
Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.'*
1 Chronicles 29: 10-13

'King David is very deliberately relinquishing his kingdom, his power and his glory to the King of kings, giving back to God every blessing he himself has received. We live in an age when this is strange. Our time, our money, our sexual ethics, our achievements, our dreams for our lives are all resolutely 'ours'. Personal surrender and costly sacrifice are rare. The kingdom of God is a nonthreatening, ephemeral concept, a vaguely and pleasantly desirable future prospect, not the kind of concrete present reality that grazes our knees as we relinquish everything we cherish to its King. But to pray these closing lines of the Lord's Prayer is to give the kingdom, the power and the glory back to God. It's to give him our little empires (family, ministry, career) and say "yours, Lord, is the kingdom". It's to give him the power-bases we've built and say "yours, Lord, is the power". It's to give him our credibility, our trophies of success, and say "yours, Lord, is the glory forever and also right now"*

* Pete Greig, *How to Pray*, p195-196

Pause and pray

Prayer of Yielding

Eternal God, I yield to You the hours of my day and the days of my life.

Creator God, I surrender the possessions that so easily possess me. King of Kings, I give You credit for my achievements and swap my ambitions for Your own.

Lord Jesus Christ, I relinquish my reputation (insofar as I am able) that You may increase and I may decrease.

Lamb of God I offer You my body this day as a living sacrifice.

For Yours is the kingdom. Yours is the power. Yours is the glory. Now and forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen.

Discover further resources for the *How to Pray* series [here](#).

May 31 2020 (click for audio)

Pause

As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-center my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

Let's read the story of Pentecost from Acts chapter 2:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:1-4

It's interesting that the Holy Spirit fills the house first and only then, a few moments later, the people within it. Clearly it's possible for houses to host the presence of God as well as people. *And so, on this very special day, I invite You now, Spirit of the Living God, to enter my home and to fill my life too in powerfully disruptive ways.*

Pause and pray

Having asked, I pause. I wait to receive a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Father who loves to 'give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (Luke 11:13).

Pause and pray

When the Spirit fell on the disciples at Pentecost, a dramatic thing happened: they were propelled out onto the streets and Peter began preaching to the crowd: 'With many ... words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.' (Acts 2:40-41)

In Judaism, the festival of Pentecost was a celebration of the giving of the Covenant - the Ten Commandments - through Moses. For Christians it is the start of another covenant with a new set of laws written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as Ezekiel had predicted. The first covenant came to a people bowing down to a golden calf so that 3000 died that day (Exodus 32), but when this covenant comes we are told that exactly the same number - 3000 - are saved. This then is the great reversal. Life displacing death. The Spirit fulfilling the Law. The birth of the church.

Our birthday is worth celebrating: We are a 2000 year-old, 2 billion strong revolutionary movement of love. The most culturally and socially diverse community on earth. Day by day we conspire to serve, forgive and create beauty. Around the world we seek to educate, liberate and advocate for those who have no voice. Our gospel has inspired artists from Michelangelo to Aretha Franklin, activists from William Wilberforce to Martin Luther King, scientists from the physicist Sir Isaac Newton to the geneticist Francis Collins.

And so, as your people gather around the world today, I thank you, Lord, for Your beautiful, multicultural, inter-generational family. Revive and sanctify us once again we pray. Forgive our many sins and make us holy. Set our hearts on fire again with the good news of Your gospel.

Pause and pray

When Jesus predicts Pentecost He says: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" (Acts 1:8)

On this day last year, millions gathered in cathedrals, church buildings, public squares and homes from 178 nations and 65 denominations to pray as part of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative. It's tempting to feel that we've moved backwards since then. The nations are mourning; millions remain locked-down.

And yet so many of our prayers for the Kingdom to Come are being answered in ways we could never have imagined last year. Amidst great tragedy and anxiety, millions are turning to prayer, church attendance is growing dramatically, the people of God are on the front-lines of this crisis, songs of blessing are reaching far beyond the walls of the church, we have been propelled out, as it were, into the streets with a message of life and hope.

I pray now for a renewed mobilization of mission, an outpouring of fresh confidence in the gospel this Pentecost, that we would not miss this moment but would instead be Christ's witnesses to the very ends of the earth. I name before You now, Lord, people I know who do not yet know you and ask You to give me opportunities to talk to them about You.

Pause and Pray

Finally, having prayed for the Spirit of God to fall afresh on me, to revive His church, and to mobilize us in fresh mission, I gather up all these prayers in the words of a great invocation written by William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army -

Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame,
Thy blood-bought gift today we claim,
Look down and see this waiting host,
We want another Pentecost,
Send the fire! (x3)

God of Elijah, hear our cry:
To make us fit to live or die,
To burn up every trace of sin,
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin,
Send the fire! (x3)

'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead,
The fire will meet our every need,
For strength to ever do the right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
For pow'r to walk the world in white,
Send the fire! (x3)

Amen.