



W H E N Y O U P R A Y



DEVO

WEEK 1

When You Pray

Devotional & Next Steps

April 18/19

Below you will find several ways to engage with the series and grow your spiritual life.

Here are some important things to remember as you engage:

- **We're all in different seasons right now** – some of us are home with little to do, some have added new jobs as homeschool teachers, others are putting in extra hours at work and accomplishing essential tasks for the sake of others, and still others are sick and navigating other hardships. *Wherever you are, we see you.*
- **Based on your current situation, you might find you can only implement one of the suggestions below.** *That is okay.* Others of you might be able to implement each suggestion every single day. *That is also okay.*
 - Potential Ways to Engage: Try one practice each day OR choose one or two practices to focus on throughout the week
- **Use this guide as it's helpful and know that the Lord sees you and honors your dedication to Him.**

Reflection

If you haven't listened to or watch the message from the weekend, take some time to do that. Then, spend some time reflecting about the main points of the message. If it helps you to journal, do that! If it helps you to externally process, ask a friend or family member to chat with you about your thoughts. Throughout, try bringing your thoughts to God – share your answers with Him as if He were a friend sitting next to you. After all, wherever you are, God is already there!

Here are some questions to guide you:

- Paul asked an honest question: Do you really want things to go back to the way they were? What was your gut response to this question? What was underneath your response?
- Do you believe that God has something better for your relationship with Him? Why or why not?
- What is distracting you from your relationship with God?

- What do you anticipate about the next season? What do you ignore or avoid about this season?
- What steps might you need to take to make daily prayer a priority?

Scripture to Study

For further study on prayer, dig deeply into the following passages and use the questions as they are helpful.

Matthew 6:5-15

- Why does Jesus identify those who want to be seen praying as hypocrites?
- Why does he instruct the people to pray in secret?
- What comfort do verses 7-8 give you? What might these verses change about your prayer life or your perception of prayer?
- Spend time praying verses 9-15 as Jesus instructs. Don't be afraid to go slowly and reflect on each phrase.

John 15:1-17 & John 17:20-26

- The entirety of John 17 is Jesus praying – first about his own fate, then for his disciples, and then in verses 20-26, for all believers. Jesus prayed for *you* before you even existed. But before John 17, comes a passage in John 15 where Jesus gives an analogy to explain what a relationship with Jesus looks like. Read John 15:1-17.
- What do you notice about this passage – what words, phrases and images are repeated?
- Why do you think the words “abide” (ESV) or “remain” (NIV) are repeated so often? What does it mean to abide in Jesus?
- According to the text, how do we know if we are abiding in Jesus?
- Jesus talks about abiding in verses 1-11, then switches to talking about loving others in verses 12-17. How are the two sections related? What is significant about the order – abiding, then loving others?
- How might Jesus be inviting you to abide more completely in him?
- Read John 17:20-26. Receive it as if Jesus were praying these words with you right now.
 - If you'd like, spend time writing the verses down but incorporate your name... for example, verse 24 – Father, I desire that [name] also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am.

A Spiritual Practice to Try

One of the best ways to grow our relationship with God is to try different spiritual practices. Think of it like spending time with a friend – ideally, you do many different types of activities with friends, not just one thing over and over again. Every spiritual practice brings something unique and a new way to engage with God. Some practices will stretch you more than others, and that’s a good thing!

This week: Try the Spiritual Practice of Sabbath

Sabbath comes from the word Shabbath which means “a day of rest.” The word Saturday appears to come from this word and Israelites would take their Sabbath on Saturdays. We read about the importance of rest or Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3 where God, himself rests and in Exodus 20:8-11 where the Israelites receive instructions on the Sabbath. One of my favorite examples comes from Exodus 16, where God gives the Israelites manna – they were instructed to gather just enough for each day but on the sixth day, they were to gather extra so they would be able to Sabbath on the seventh day.

Sabbath allows us to direct everything in our day (and our lives) to God. For us, Sabbath looks a lot different than it did for the Israelites. We won’t be gathering manna in preparation, but we might plan strategic grocery deliveries. We might not choose Saturday, but we can choose a day of our week to orient all things to God and delight in His goodness.

Depending on your circumstances, the suggestion of practicing Sabbath might fall on your ears differently (you might feel like all you’ve been doing lately is “resting”!). Sabbath is still vitally important and there is a difference between Sabbath and taking a day off. The JW Grow podcast referenced below takes a deeper dive into what Sabbath looks like as our community navigates life safer at home.

To learn more about spiritual practices and Sabbath, check out the following:

- Podcast with Diane Bryant -- JW Grow: Spiritual Practices – Overview & Sabbath
<http://jacobswellchurch.church/messages>
- Bible Project Video on Sabbath
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFTLvKB3JLM&vl=en>

Receive this blessing during your Sabbath:

May this day bring Sabbath rest to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored, and my imagination in God be re-stored.

May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me into the week and into the life to come.

A Style of Prayer to Try

Similar to trying new spiritual practices, it's helpful to try new ways of prayer. Prayer in and of itself is a spiritual practice, but has many, many varieties!

You might find it comforting to return to The Lord's Prayer or The Apostles Creed during the week, even on a daily basis.

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against
us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Apostles Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our
Lord.*

*He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

*and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.*

*He will come again to judge the living and
the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
One holy United Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Weekly or Daily Examen

Practicing the Examen is also a spiritual practice – but it’s so helpful as a daily or weekly exercise, that it’s worth naming distinctly. The Examen is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It’s a time set aside for thankful reflection of where God is and has been. It’s especially helpful to do this on a weekly basis during your Sabbath day. Once you get used to the practice, it’s easy and helpful to implement daily, either in the morning or evening. It has five steps, which most people take in order and takes about 15-20 minutes.

1. Quiet yourself and remember you are in God’s presence.
2. Ask God to give you eyes to see. We want to see our day or week with God’s eyes, not just our own.
3. Practice gratitude. Enter with a posture of gratitude, reminding yourself that the day or week you have lived is a gift from God.
4. Review your day or week. Think back on the things that happened during your day or week – allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in your thinking.
 - a. Desolation: Where in your day or week did you find yourself moving away from God? When did I not love? When did I not experience God?
 - b. Consolation: Where in your day or week did you find yourself moving towards God? When did I love? When did I experience God?
5. Resolve any pattern or concern that came up during the examination. Look toward the day to come and ask “Where do I need God in the day to come?” Close in prayer.