



W H E N   Y O U   P R A Y



DEVO

WEEK 2

# When You Pray

## Devotional & Next Steps

April 25/26

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.

Here are some questions to guide you:

- Paul mentioned that he believes that as a pastor, the single most important thing people need to be taught is how to pray. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?
- He also said that the hardest thing about teaching a life of prayer is getting people to pray in consistent, life giving ways. Does this resonate with you?
- How have you struggled to pray consistently? What have you found difficult about prayer? What have you found life giving about prayer?
- Do you believe that consistent prayer life would change your day to day life? Why or why not? How do you think your life might change?
- What might God be inviting you into this season?

# Scripture to Study

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

## Matthew 6:9-11, 24-34

- We focused on the phrase “Give us this day our daily bread” this weekend and looked at this quote from C.S. Lewis:
  - *“Never in peace or war, commit your virtue or happiness to the future. Happy work is best done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment ‘as to the Lord.’ It is our daily bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.”*
- If you’re being honest, where do you look for your daily bread?
- Read verses 24-34. Jesus begins to end his point with a big “therefore” in verse 25 & 34 – as if he is saying, “Given everything I’ve said, do not worry.”
  - What is the problem with serving two masters?
  - According to Jesus, what is the problem with worrying?
  - Why do you think Jesus uses metaphors of creation – birds, lilies, etc.? How do Jesus’ illustrations help us to not worry?
  - How does Jesus connect what we serve (v. 24) with our experience of worrying?
  - What must we believe in order to resist anxiety about tomorrow?
  - What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”? (v.33)
  - How does Jesus’ view of God as a loving Father compare with your view of God? How can you grow your relationship with the Father during this season?
  - How might you focus on God’s kingdom and God’s nature in the coming days and weeks rather than your anxieties or worries?

## Exodus 16:13-30

- Background: God had freed the Israelites from slavery and they were just beginning their trek through the wilderness. The Israelites have begun grumbling (as they... and we... often do) because they were running out of food. God assured them that He would provide for them by coming to them in the form of a cloud and promised to provide them with food on a daily basis.

- Why do you think the Israelites did not recognize the food God had given them, despite the fact that He had told them He would provide food? (v. 15)
- Why would God instruct the Israelites to gather just as much as they needed?
- Why do you think God created the food so that it could not last (what was leftover would not be good the next day)? (v.20-21)
- Why would God make an exception to the above scenario on the Sabbath? *(To learn more about Sabbath, check out last week's devotional).*
- Why do you think the Israelites still went out to gather manna on the Sabbath? (v.27)
- What does the Israelite's experience of manna and quail have to do with daily bread?

## 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 Lectio Divina**

Lectio Divina is Latin for "Divine (or Holy) Reading" and is a practice of scriptural reading, reflection and prayer. Traditionally, Lectio Divina has four steps and works well in a group where one person is a reader and others are simply listening. However, technology gives us the advantage to do Lectio Divina on our own. Check out the Dwell app (link below) to hear scripture read – it's like a Bible app, but as an audiobook!

Lectio Divina is based on a pattern of silence, reading and reflection. We need spiritual practices like Lectio Divina because they help us center and reflect, paying attention to the Living Word that is at work within us.

There isn't a perfect or formal process to Lectio Divina and you can check out the JW Grow podcast (link below) to hear Diane Bryant talk about the practice and try it out.

Here are four simple steps that should be part of Lectio Divina:

1. **Read a passage of Scripture** (Lectio): Read the passage aloud (or listen to a passage on the Dwell app). Most people like to close their eyes to focus on listening. Pay attention to a word, phrase or image that is highlighted for you in the passage. Sit in silence.
2. **Reflect on Scripture** (Meditatio): Read or listen to the passage again. During the silence, reflect on how the passage speaks to you and your life today.
3. **Respond to God** (Oratio): Read or listen to the passage again. During a few minutes of silence, consider how God might be calling you to respond. Pray and tell Jesus your intended response to what you've heard. It might be an action, something to think about, something to believe, a praise to extend to God, or something else.
4. **Rest in God** (Contemplatio): Read or listen to the passage again. Rest in the words in silence for a few minutes. Close with a prayer.

You can practice Lectio Divina with any passage of Scripture, but the psalms (or poetic passages) and gospel stories work especially well. Here are a few passages of Scripture you could choose to practice Lectio Divina with:

- Psalm 139
- John 15:1-17 (*To check out a Bible study on this passage, look at last week's devotional*)
- Isaiah 43:8-21

To learn more about Lectio Divina, check out the following:

- [Podcast with Diane Bryant -- JW Grow: Spiritual Practices – Lectio Divina](#)
- [Download the Dwell App](#) for free – a great way to listen to scripture whether you are practicing Lectio Divina or not.

# The Lord's Prayer & Apostles Creed

You might find it comforting to return to The Lord's Prayer or The Apostles Creed during the week, even on a daily basis. You could even practice Lectio Divina with the Lord's Prayer, as it's taken from Matthew 6.

## ***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.