

# **Lenten Prayer Guide**

*The Presence of Christ*



**February 22 - April 8, 2012**

**Pascack Bible Church**  
*181 Piermont Avenue*  
*Hillsdale, NJ 07642*

# Lenten Prayer Guide

Welcome to PBC's Lenten Prayer Guide. Traditionally for Christian Churches, the days leading up to Easter have been set aside as a time of repentance and reflection. For the past two years as a congregation we have united in prayer, using a simple devotional booklet to guide us. These devotions have been written by many in our congregation. Each year, the people of PBC remark how encouraged they were by the writings from such a variety of their Christian brothers and sisters. Read the passage first then devotion afterwards, letting them guide your prayer.

Our theme this year is ***The Presence of God*** and reflects the reality that while God is the Creator of the universe, mighty and glorious, and seemingly hard to know and unapproachable, He is also very much near us. He has purposed to reveal Himself to us, to have relationship with us, and a source of joy for us.

Additionally, pray for the people in your sphere of life (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.) who have yet to come to trust in Jesus. Pray daily for the opportunity to invite them to our Easter services and that God would move them to accept that invitation.

We welcome you to join together with your brothers and sisters in these next days on our journey to Easter Sunday and the Resurrection! These passages will confirm once again what we already know, that God is with us and He is full of grace and mercy. Amen!

People I am praying for during Lent:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Wednesday, February 22 (Day 1)



### **Genesis 3:7-9**

In the beginning, God walked the earth with Adam and Eve. In time, however, they broke God's first command and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result they gained wisdom of good and evil but in turn were banished from the Garden and, consequently, the daily presence of God. Furthermore, they were faced with the bleak prospect of lives of hardship ending in death. But God loves us and promised through his prophet Isaiah the coming of Emanuel, God with us, with whom we would once again walk and in whom we would again have eternal life.

When Jesus did come, he walked and talked with individuals and personally asked them to "Come, ..." with him. And people gratefully did so. Just before his death, he promised believers that the Holy Spirit would take his place and not just live with us but also act as our advocate.

During his time on earth, Jesus assured those who believed in him that they would live with Him eternally, thereby ending their banishment from Eden and God's presence.

Lord, we praise you and thank you for desiring a personal relationship with each one of us.

David Ary, Small Group Leader

## Thursday, February 23 (Day 2)



### **Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5**

As Christians we seek, or should seek, the presence of God. Some of us take walks in the woods to break away from the busyness of the world. Some people spend time in His Word to meet with God. Others seek the emotions found in worshiping with songs. Have you thought about allowing your faith to bring you into God's presence?

We find in Gen 5:24 that "Enoch walked faithfully with God." Known for his faith, Enoch walked daily with God. It was his faith that brought him into God's presence and his faith that caused him to be known as "one who pleased God." Like Enoch, our faith brings us into God's presence. The faith we put in Christ Jesus, as we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, promises us eternity in His presence. Do you walk each day faithfully with God? Does your faith cause you to want to please God? Do others see your faith in Christ in your daily actions?

Hebrews 11:5 explains that it was Enoch's faith that took him from this life preventing him from death. It is our faith that brings us to a relationship with Christ, and it is our faith that will give us an eternal life with Christ.

May your faith bring you closer to God today as you choose to walk with Him.

Troy Childress, Minister of Students

## Friday, February 24 (Day 3)



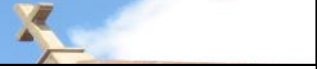
### **Nehemiah 2:8, 2:20, 4:9, 6:10**

Nehemiah can easily get “lost in the shuffle” among other godly Old Testament men. Yet he measures up to them all in his courage, integrity, consistent faith and, perhaps most important, the ways by which his trust in his God impacted his everyday struggles and challenges. He boldly demonstrates how people like you and me can become extraordinary when our God is guiding and empowering our decisions and actions. While in a Babylonian exile with many other Jews, Nehemiah felt God’s call to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the broken walls of his beloved home. He acknowledged early on that his plan was moving ahead “according to the good hand of my God upon me” (2:8). After arriving in Jerusalem and starting the construction, strong resistance developed. What was Nehemiah’s response? “In the face of opposition we made our prayer to our God and set out a guard” (4:9).

**READ THIS WONDERFUL STORY!** You will identify with this man, for whom God’s presence was not a theory but a dynamic reality that energized him 24/7. When his task was completed, in the face of great difficulties, he noted that “our enemies were disheartened because they perceived that this work was done by our God” (6:16). What an unbeatable team! A man, woman or child of faith – **and the presence of our mighty and faithful God!**

Herb Beyer, Elder

## Saturday, February 25 (Day 4)



### **Psalms 16:11**

There was a gap that once separated us from our God. That gap was created by the sins in this world. There was a time where we could not enter into the presence of the Lord. Jesus bridged that gap, giving us access to the one and only true God. Jesus gave us access to God and God desires to see us. He desires to see us even when we are broken and full of sin. He wants us to humble ourselves in His presence so he can lavish his love upon us. He desires to see us go out and help others, but to do that our hearts need to be right with him.

Go to him. Enter into his presence when you are filled with joy and praises. Go to him when you are broken and worn; hurt and confused. Bring him your hopes, prayers, anger, and fears. Enter into his presence to experience the everlasting joy he offers to his beloved children.

Psalms 16:11 says, “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

Danielle Semsey, Worship Leader

## Sunday, February 26 (Day 5)



### Psalm 23

When I (Corinne) was a kid we often read this Psalm aloud in Church. I have an Aunt Shirley and so as a child I heard “Shirley, Goodness and Mercy” would follow me, and it made me wonder why these three women were following me.

I love the heart that sees tomorrow better than today. I have always been a half-full kind of guy (Ben), and so when I hear David looking at his future as full of promise and blessing, it encourages me. When the Lord says wherever I go, I will be followed by goodness and mercy, my expectation of blessing increases.

Some days I am glad goodness has followed me, since the temptation is toward anything but goodness. Other days I am relieved to find mercy with me, as what I do not desire in the moment is justice.

I love the end of the verse as well. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I am so glad that forever has already started. Many of us put off all the best Bible promises until we are dead. We read this, I will live in the house of the Lord when I am dead. But that is not it. Forever started the day Jesus took up residence in your life. You can dwell with Him today!

Corinne Nelson, PBC Bookkeeper  
Ben Nelson, Elder

## Monday, February 27 (Day 6)



### Psalm 27:4

The Psalmist seeks to behold the beauty of the LORD. Four active verbs: seek, dwell, behold, and inquire, are used to convey his reaching out to Him. He earnestly looks for and finds Him and devotes time to be in His presence. He is blessed by sensing His splendor and grace, and admires Him. Am I willing to sacrifice my time to be in His presence, to admire Him and enjoy Him? In verse 5, he is confident that the LORD will not desert him in time of trouble. Do I share in that confidence, trusting that He cares for me and cares about me? God's beauty is revealed in His creation and in scripture.

As I contemplate His splendor and grace, my thoughts are urged by Col. 3 to set my mind on things above. I think of the Revelation description of the glory of God, of the Lamb of God, of the 24 elders, of the cherubim and seraphim and that someday I will sing His praises around the throne. I am reminded by Eph. 2 that I am already an eternal being seated in the heavenlies and in Rom. 14 that the kingdom of God is also here and now to be enjoyed. I am reminded by Mt. 5 that when the storm sends water over the gunnels of our boat, not to be a man of little faith but of great faith, for my God will not leave me or forsake me.

Carl Kiel, Elder Chair

## Tuesday, February 28 (Day 7)



### Psalm 27:8

Imagine how your day or your life would be if we would daily “Seek His Face.” Too often our lives are filled with too many things that we fail to stop and “Seek His Face.” When we want quick answers to our situations or advice on our problems, are we going to “Google” or text a friend instead of “Seeking His Face”? David in the Psalms prayed to God when many wanted to bring him down and said “My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face, Your face, Lord I seek” (27:8). He reminds us “Look to the Lord and his strength and seek his face always” (105:4).

When the Lord appeared to Solomon after he had finished the temple and royal palace He said, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14). The Lord has everything we are seeking. Only in seeking Him and His face will we be satisfied. Won’t you humble yourself, pray, turn from your ways and seek His face? Wouldn’t you love an audience with your God who loves you, equips you, made you for a purpose, wants the best for you and wants fellowship with you? The Lord gives us a wonderful promise that he who seeks will find. (I Chron. 28:9)

Lord, help me daily to seek your face, to fix my eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. (Heb. 12:2)

Pam Osterhus, Treasurer

## Wednesday, February 29 (Day 8)



### Psalm 34:6-10

In this psalm, David has experienced the Lord and His goodness. He has found protection in Him. Now He invites us to do the same: to taste, to experience and realize the Lord’s blessings in our own lives. We’re invited to put our trust in Him, to seek Him.

This world is filled with trials, sadness, and conflict. We all experience troubles, some big, some smaller, but all very real to us. (We) “who seek the Lord lack no good thing.” He is our refuge, our hope.

“Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Go to Him now in prayer, seek His blessings and His peace.

Tracy Eager, KidVenture Worship Leader

## Thursday, March 1 (Day 9)



### Psalm 40:1-3

David said, “I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,” (We too have this same awesome option to ask the Lord for help in times of need and distress, so let’s ask today.) “And He turned to me and heard my cry.” (Wow, and yes, the Lord will and does turn to us and gives his full attention to our cries for help when we ask. “He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire.” (No matter what stage of life we are in between adolescence to old age, we encounter pits of trouble, distress, sickness, sinfulness, etc., and just like David, the Lord will lift and help us out from our respective pits.) “He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walk along. He has given me a new song to sing.” (This reminds me of the hymn “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”) “Many will see what He has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.” (Be encouraged today, as the Lord turns to us, to help get us out of any pit we may be in. Then our experiences will be a visible witness.)

W. Jay Horn, School of Discipleship

## Friday, March 2 (Day 10)



### Psalm 46:1-2

A refuge is a place of security and safety, or to find peace from our circumstances. Our culture suggests a number of possibilities for refuge when things are tough. For some, it’s their work or a relationship. For others, a drug of choice. Now, someone seeking refuge is often called a refugee. God’s word suggests that we are all refugees. As a Christian, I realize that I am not of this world. So, whatever the world may offer as a refuge or a resting place will be inadequate for the job. As always, the world leaves us with a jar half empty. We may think that we can find shelter or peace in someone or something, but that’s only half the equation. We still need the strength emotionally, physically or spiritually, to withstand whatever is driving us to seek shelter. Thankfully, the Psalmist says that the One who created us is our refuge, our place of shelter. And when we seek refuge in God’s presence, we can also know that He throws in the strength to face the situation, as well. That’s the great news about God being our double-barreled help! That’s why the Psalmist could say that we should not fear. He knew that fear is based on uncertainty. And the one thing that’s certain are God’s promises. In this case, His promise to be our refuge AND strength.

We are all refugees while on earth. So, let’s remember the land of our true citizenship, and where we find our refuge and strength! Amen!

Joe Battaglia, Leadership Council

## Saturday, March 3 (Day 11)



### Psalm 63:1

This Psalm of King David is written while in the wilderness (desert) of Judah (praise). He seems to be desperately calling out and seeking God while experiencing his present devastating conditions. Remember, he has been ordained by God as King of Israel and note that no one is necessarily exempt from “a dry and thirsty land” experience. Situations can push us out to the wilderness but we are not without resolve.

Even though we may feel far from the resources and/or comforts of home, a loss of some kind, or perhaps a dry spiritual interlude, we have access to the Father in any situation! King David pulls out the survival skills needed. First, he confesses “O God you are my God.” He not only believes God is the one who can deliver him from his troubles, but acknowledges his genuine relationship with the Almighty Creator, David owns God to himself, as his personal redeemer! The flesh wars against the spirit and tugs to the opposite direction from God’s presence, but even the physical body can come into unison with the desire of the soul.

If things get bad, don’t wait, seek God early, so if you find yourself in the desert of Judah you can still praise God and not faint.

Vincent Gambardella, Worship Team

## Sunday, March 4 (Day 12)



### Psalm 84:10

One day in the presence of the Lord is better than 3 years elsewhere. I can always tell in my life when I have been out of the courts of the Lord for too long. I try to spend time in His courts every day, but have you ever found that even in your disciplines of devotion, like quiet time or Bible reading, you are missing the presence of the Lord? Have you ever found yourself days away from the Lord’s presence? I confess I have.

But I have good news! I have found a highway that leads directly to the presence of the Lord! I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart, and I will enter His courts with praise. I will worship the beauty of His holiness, and so enter quickly into that place I love.

Sometimes I feel like I have a spiritual gas gauge, and I am running on empty. As quick as I can I crank up my favorite worship tunes, and start singing along. Soon singing their words turns into singing my words, singing my words turns into real heart worship. I have turned my eyes to the Father, and just as He did with the prodigal, He has run out to meet me. Hallelujah!

Ben Nelson, Elder

## Monday, March 5 (Day 13)



### Psalm 91

We miss the sweeping grandeur of this Psalm when we constrict its soaring promises of eternal protection in God's presence into assurances that we will live trouble free lives. A life of ease for the Christian is never suggested in the Bible (John 16:33). Romans 5:4 declares that trials are necessary for our sanctification. So we must understand this Psalm does not speak of deliverance from temporal pain and death but of deliverance beyond death.

The Omnipotent Lord is unassailable and protects us from the "serpent" and the "lion" that would drag our eternal souls to hell. Delight in the might of God but do not lose site of the condition attached to this protection. Verses 1,9 & 14 teach us that the promises of delivery, salvation and the intimate presence of the Lord are only for those who "abide in him," have made him in "their habitation" and are "devoted" to him. Those who abide in the Lord are saturated with Him, they dwell in scripture until it courses through them (John 8:31), their reactions and insights become Christ-like (1 Corinthians 2:16). They pray without ceasing and derive all their character from him. So "dwell with him" and "set your love upon him" and God promises you "will know my name...and see my salvation."

Todd Lukas, Worship Team

## Tuesday, March 6 (Day 14)



### Psalm 95:1-2

When America began to seriously debate the morality of practicing slavery, one wealthy southern plantation owner defended his treatment of his slaves by remarking that they were obviously content because they sang all the time. Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and orator for the abolitionist movement, said this could not be further from the truth. "Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy," he wrote in his autobiography, "the songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart." Many old gospel songs were composed by American slaves who sang to ease their pain, as well as to declare their hope of glory on the other side of life.

Singing is one way the Lord gives us to cry out to Him, and to remind ourselves and others about His mighty promises. Despite our circumstances, the Lord is worthy of a song from the lips of his children. As we enter daily into His gates with thanksgiving and praise, the peace and freedom of belonging to a King who delights in taking away our burdens will bubble over into shouts of triumph. We might never be free of certain earthly bonds, but what is that compared to the knowledge that the Savior who willingly died for us, plans to one day create a new heaven and a new earth? Sing to the Lord today despite your burdens, and allow yourself to revel in the peace and victory He waits to lavish on you.

Hope Grajcar, Youth Intern, Worship Team

## Wednesday, March 7 (Day 15)



### Psalm 95:6-7

I love sheep – in fact I collect them. Because of my interest in sheep, I've learned that they are very interesting animals, and it's no accident that God refers to us as sheep! Those cute, fuzzy creatures are often stubborn, rebellious, fearful, ignorant and unable to care for themselves. They are in great need of a good shepherd who will guide, protect and provide for them.

We too, were in need of a Good Shepherd, so God sent his Son who paid with his life so that we could become "the sheep of His hand." The Psalmist in this passage not only invites us to come and worship our Creator and Redeemer, but also to enjoy an intimate relationship with our Shepherd – the One Who is always present to love, guide, encourage, and provide. There might be times in our lives when we feel distant from God because of disappointment, doubt, fear, anxiety – or anything else, but he, as our Good Shepherd, is never far. He is our constant companion – ready to nourish us in his Word, supply us with strength for the battles we face, and to assure us of his love no matter what our circumstances. "He is our God and we are the sheep of his hand."

Jane Marshall, Leadership Council

## Thursday, March 8 (Day 16)



### Psalm 100: 4-5

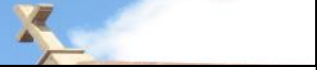
This verse reminds us that because of God's goodness, enduring love and faithfulness we can enter his gates with thanksgiving and praise! We can be certain of God's goodness. "When the ruler came to Jesus and asked, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Why do you call me good,' Jesus answered. 'No one is good except God alone' (Luke 18:18-19). "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). There is nothing evil or dark at all about our God, only goodness and light and that is worthy of our praise!

Lord, we are thankful today that we have a God who is thoroughly good, loving and faithful. And because you are good, loving and faithful, we trust you with our lives, our loved ones and our futures. We enter your gates today with thanksgiving and praise!

"Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

Margot Klope, Connections Women's Ministry

## Friday, March 9 (Day 17)



### Psalm 103:1-5

King David was a creative, gifted, passionate songwriter, as well as a practical, tactical, soldier and warrior, who, in spite of the dichotomy, wasn't afraid to be completely vulnerable and honest before the Lord. When David declares "*bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me,*" he prays from his deepest core and innermost being, communicating with God with complete abandon. His understanding of who God is, was born out of deep trial and suffering, yet great joy, trust and mature peace. David knew what it felt like to walk through the deepest waters, having been pursued for many years by a jealous King (Saul) who wanted to murder him. He made unwise choices as an adulterer and murderer, and bore the pain of losing a baby and seeing his children divided against each other. Yet David understood complete bliss as he experienced the "benefits" and constancy of God's presence, forgiveness, healing, protection, goodness, love and mercy. We might not have journeyed through the same specific experiences as David, but, like David, God has granted us both trial and joy in our lives and wants us to "forget NOT" the many "benefits" that He blesses us with. May we continually choose to worship and bless Him from our deepest core in the midst of our trials **AND** joys. May we recognize that these "benefits" are encompassed by His "crown of love" and "tender mercies" toward us.

Sharon Chang, Worship Leader

## Saturday, March 10 (Day 18)



### Psalm 103:13-14

Psalm 103 speaks of God's compassion toward those that fear Him, despite the sinful nature and frailty of man. Being a father, I know that feeling of compassion for my children mentioned in verse 13 (I'm told that mothers feel this even more!). No parent likes to see their child sick or hurt, whether it be physically or emotionally; we would rather it be us than them, or that somehow we could take the pain away. We only want the best for them. God knows that the sin in our lives causes us (and him) pain. He also knows that we are frail beings, and our "days are like grass" (v. 15). Yet he has compassion on those that fear him (v.13, 17). He sent his Son so that those who believe will have eternal life and will not be condemned (John 5:24).

Despite our sin and frailty, the vastness of his love extends over us. How great the love he has for us! The words of Stuart Townsend's song sum it up so well: "How deep the Father's love for us, How vast beyond all measure, That He should give His only Son, To make a wretch His treasure."

Prayer: Father, we thank you for your unfailing love, and for sending your Son so that we may be forgiven. Help us to tell others about that love.

Brian Osterhus, Worship Team, Leadership Council

## Sunday, March 11 (Day 19)



### **Psalm 123:1-2**

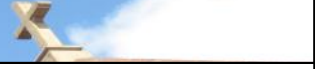
As we live, in good times or bad, we should be dependent on the Lord for direction and help because He is our Creator, Provider and Savior. The world may think this is not necessary, even foolish. However, Psalm 19:7-8 says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”

We look to the Lord trustingly because of what he has done for us. He lived among us, died for us and now sits at the right hand of God interceding for us. So we can look to the Lord with hope and for hope! As Peter said in John 6:68, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Also Psalm 34: 5,7,18 says “Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.... The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.....The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Lord, turn our eyes from all else, back to you, the lover of our souls. Amen.

Kathy Semsey, Youth, Welcoming, & KidVenture Ministries

## Monday, March 12 (Day 20)



### **Song of Solomon 1:2-3**

This passage describes a romance between a king and his beloved. Many of us have at some point been physically attracted to another human being. The thought of their touch or kiss, the smell of the fragrance they wear, even the mere sight of them, was enough to ignite passion in us. From our perspective we could easily ask “Who wouldn’t love this person?” Of course in some ways, this passage or even the entire book seems a bit out of place in the Bible. It’s so intimate, so passionate, so R-rated.

But buried just below the surface is the reality that our relationship with God is to exhibit some of these same powerful romantic characteristics. Some men struggle with this imagery and with Christ’s describing us as His bride and He our Bridegroom. But from a human perspective, what better illustration is there for the passionate relationship He is offering to have with us? We are to long for the touch or kiss of God and to delight in the sight of Him and in being close enough to even recognize His fragrance.

Lord, teach us to long for you, to look for you, to experience your presence and touch.

Chet Klope, Elder and Senior Pastor

## Tuesday, March 13 (Day 21)



### **Song of Solomon 2:4-5**

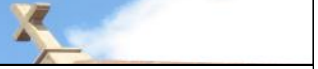
How would you feel about getting an invitation to a state dinner at the White House? My guess is that you would feel very important and pleased to be recognized by the leader of the most powerful country in the world. What if you were also seated at the President's table? You would probably feel even more important and honored.

God has called us to His banqueting table signifying we are special to Him. He wants so much to fellowship with us that He made provisions to remove all possible obstacles to allow us to be in His presence. He performed the ultimate sacrifice of giving up His Son on the cross so we can have the opportunity to be permanently in His glorious presence. His Son on the cross is a banner that displays His love and desire for us to be at His banqueting table.

So, do you feel extremely important to be at the banqueting table of the God of the universe? To be at the table of the President of the USA is an honor but to be seated with the God of the universe will be glorious.

David Chang, Elder

## Wednesday, March 14 (Day 22)



### **Song of Solomon 2:10-13**

There are many interpretations of this Song of Songs. The one that resonates with me is that of the Shepherd King, Jesus and the Maiden/Bride, the believer. The words we consider today are the voice of Jesus calling us to step out of the place of the pure intimacy of worship into the place of ministry. Our times of intimate worship are intended to prepare us for times of partnering with Jesus in His work.

The language tells us the seasons are changing. Winter is over and the spring is on the rise like in "The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe" where the White Witch's winter finally breaks and Father Christmas is in the land at last.

Here Jesus is calling to His bride a 2-fold call. First, "rise up!" How many of us would have a much closer walk with the Lord if we could only get our selves to "rise up?" How many times have I reset the alarm clock? Such good intentions when I got in bed, but the warmth and comfort of bed fights against the call of the Lover of my soul to "Rise up."

Secondly, His call is to "Come Away." Oh how we resist change, but as the seasons change and as our relationship with Jesus deepens, so does our need to get out there and join Him, to partner with Him.

Ben Nelson, Elder

## Thursday, March 15 (Day 23)



### **Song of Solomon 4:16**

This is probably my favorite verse in the Song. Here the maiden prays an astounding prayer. In the word pictures of the Song, the garden she speaks of is her innermost heart. It is that beautiful place where she touches the Lover of her soul.

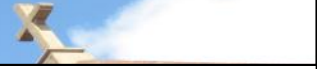
Hear her cry – “Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad.” The north wind would be the wind of adversity, and the south wind, the warm friendly winds of prosperity. Effectively, she says, do what ever it takes to improve the fragrance of my life, and to make it a sweet smelling offering to my Lord and Lover Jesus.

The next phrase in the Song is the turning point of the entire story. Her, for the first time, the maiden turns ownership of her life, the deepest part of her life, her innermost being, over to the Lover of her soul. She says to Jesus, come into YOUR garden and taste its choice fruits.

Can you join her in this prayer of total devotion and surrender today? Can you say with the Shulamite woman, Awake north wind, and blow you south wind so that my Lord can be pleased in His garden?

Ben Nelson, Elder

## Friday, March 16 (Day 24)



### **Isaiah 55:6-7**

I am humbled when I consider how the holy Creator of all desires to dwell with his people, to have a relationship with them. From walking with Adam in the garden, to his presence dwelling with the Israelites in the fire and the cloud, to Emanuel – God with Us – God has always sought out a relationship with his creation. This relationship is what differentiates his people from all the others on earth. Deut. 4:7 says, “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him”? Even when Israel, the harlot who broke the covenant over and over again, strayed, the Lord himself called her back.

Oh, how the merciful Lord pleads with his people to seek him, and turn to him, to once again join in fellowship with him. How the Lord implores us to seek him, to turn from our wicked ways and thoughts, and to call on him. Yes – you who are far away today; you who have never known the presence of the Almighty; you who once did, but now do not. What beautiful words these are for you today! He wants you to find him.

Today he may be found, and he will freely pardon.

Kathy Jesson, World Mission Team Chair

## Saturday, March 17 (Day 25)



### **Jeremiah 29:11-13**

Why is it so easy for us to “forget” about the Lord in our daily living? Maybe it is because we aren’t looking for him. He certainly hasn’t gone anywhere and today’s scriptures declare that we are to call upon him, pray to him and he will listen to us. He also declares that when we seek him with all our heart we will find him.

Lucy said it best to her siblings when only she saw Aslan in the woods in “Prince Caspian” the movie based on CS Lewis’s book. “It’s Aslan! Don’t you see? He’s right...there. He was there. He wanted us to follow him.” “Why wouldn’t I have seen him?” asked Peter. “Maybe you weren’t looking for him.” said Lucy.

Lord, we thank you for knowing the plans for our lives. The scriptures tell us your plans are to prosper us and not harm us, your plans are to give us hope and a future. Help us to seek you daily with all of our hearts, so that we will find you and follow your ways. Amen.

Jay C. Horn, Sr. High Sunday School Leader

## Sunday, March 18 (Day 26)



### **Jeremiah 33:3**

*Call upon me...God asks us to perform a simple action. We can call directly upon the Creator of the Universe. We have the ear of the King! ... and I will answer you. God, the holy one, will answer us. He reaches down from His throne to communicate with us. By His Word, His Son, and the Holy Spirit, he bridges the chasm between Heaven and Earth. ... and I will show great and unsearchable things that you do not know. He will reveal to us the eternal wisdom that only comes from Him.*

But, unfortunately, we get caught up in temporal events: the cares of the present life the worries of today, the concerns for tomorrow, the thoughts that focus us inward on ourselves. How can we be lifted outside our narrow earthly focus and see the wonderful eternal things of God? We must take time to study His Word. We must learn to call upon Him, to wait and to listen and be ready to receive the lasting treasures.

Temple Ary, Small Group Leader

## Monday, March 19 (Day 27)

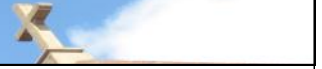


### Matthew 6:6

In a land where religion had become an outward show of piety (with an inward lack of holiness), Jesus said, “*When you pray, go into your room, close the door...*” He reminds us that prayer is not a skill to be mastered, or a badge of honor to be displayed, but the lifeblood of a very special relationship, one cultivated in secret. He issues a special invitation to meet with an audience of One, the only One that matters, our heavenly Father. “*And pray to your Father who is unseen.*” 1 Peter 1: says, “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him...” Closing the door on the very visible, distracting, demanding world, and spending time with our invisible heavenly Father in secret, is proof of the kind of faith He is looking for. “*Then your Father who sees what is done in secret...*” He watches and waits. He hears our cries and requests and needs expressed in the secret place. Abraham met Him there, Moses met Him there, Jesus met Him there. Jesus promises that the Father “... *will reward you.*” As He told Abraham, “*I am your exceeding great reward.*” In the secret place, the Holy Spirit is given; strength, wisdom, grace are given – in a word, He gives Himself.

Christa Grajcar, Welcoming Ministry

## Tuesday, March 20 (Day 28)



### Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus gives instructions to His disciples and us about how to pray in this passage. First, Jesus tells us to call Him *our Father*. He wants intimate conversation with His beloved children and wants us to recognize that God alone is *holy* and to be *revered*. His glorious *kingdom in heaven* and ultimately on earth, is our inheritance and is full of His perfect *will*. When we yield to His *will* on this present *earth*, He delights in us and we are conformed more to His image. Then, He wants us to ask Him *today* for our basic needs and recognize that He is our gracious Provider. Next, to restore communion with God, we need to ask Him for *forgiveness* for our daily *sins* and extend *forgiveness* to others for their daily *sins* against us. Since we currently live in a fallen world where Satan, *the evil one* has been given dominion for a time, we need a *Deliverer* from the *temptation* that is all around us.

God, the majestic Creator of the universe has loved us since the beginning of time and has provided a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who paid our debt of sin. Believers receive Jesus’ perfect righteousness so we can approach the holy throne of God and seek His Presence. Our prayers to our Father in heaven bring us near to His heart, while providing strength and joy for living each day.

Kate Jones, Small Group Leader

## Wednesday, March 21 (Day 29)



### **Matthew 7:7-11**

Frequently when we feel distant from God, we mistakenly ask the questions “God, where are you?” or “God! Why is this happening to me?” The reality is that whenever we feel distant from God it is not because He has moved, but that we have moved away from Him.

This passage reminds us of one of the most refreshing promises anyone can experience. It is the promise of God to commune with us, to be at our side, to guide and protect. The pathway to this promise is found in the simple act of desiring His presence and walking into it. Do you need His guidance? Go to Him and ask for it, He will give it to you. Do you need to know Him more? Go seek Him out, knock on His door, He will answer.

Where is God that I might seek Him? John 1:1-4 tells us that God is in His Word, the Scriptures. Seek Him there as you read your Bible today and every day. John 14:15-21 tells us that God the Holy Spirit is living within us, to counsel us and to guide us into truth. Seek to hear His voice as you pray today and every day.

Chet Klope, Elder and Senior Pastor

## Thursday, March 22 (Day 30)



### **Matthew 14:25-27**

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears, Psalm 34. Wow, what a promise, what a comfort that my maker and that of the whole universe, considers me worthy of His care!

I do know that peace from God, what it feels like to be held close to His heart, Isaiah 40:11. I know that even in the darkest of nights when the unthinkable happens, after crying out to Jesus, He's been there.

I know, as well, how He can turn that darkness into light! How can I not see Him working, when that small body lying in the road, who I thought was dying because of me and my car, is now coming to our youth group!

How awesome is our God! Lord, thank you for never letting go of us!

Iris Mehl, Welcoming Ministry

## Friday, March 23 (Day 31)



### Matthew 18:19-20

Looking at this portion of scripture in context, Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus is giving instructions on exercising Church discipline i.e. how to deal with a "brother" (someone in the family) who has offended someone, (committed a sin) and the four steps of discipline the Church should take in restoring the offender to fellowship. The four steps are in verses 15-17. Keep in mind that the ultimate objective of the encounter is restoration and not punishment. Jesus is saying to the Disciples to seek the Father's will about the activities of the accused and then bring God's will to bear on the situation, verse 18. In verse 19, Jesus promises to guide the church's attempt to carry out the will of the Father on earth.

Finally in verse 20, the fellowship that the Church enjoys in reaching consensus about disciplining a fellow believer, is actually brought about by the *presence of Jesus*. These verses are commonly understood to be a promise regarding consensus in prayer, they specifically deal with the unity of the Church in rendering a decision about a sinning member. His *presence* was with the disciples then and we can be assured that his *presence* is with us now.

Barbara Schiro, Administrator, Director of Children's Ministries

## Saturday, March 24 (Day 32)



### Mark 11:20-24

The heart is the issue in Mark 11:22-24. Matthew 12:34 "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,*" confirms this. We need to believe in our heart without doubting. We need to draw near to God and listen to His heart. We do this by spending time with Him in the secret place - in His Word, praying, listening. This is where and how we cultivate the assurance of heart to be able to say with confidence what God has revealed to us, without doubting. Our agreement and confession has to be in alignment with His heart, His desires, and His will.

*"We walk by faith and not by sight (circumstances, feelings)."* 2Corinthians 5:7

*"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."* Proverbs 18:21

Let's develop a deeper heart-to-heart connection with the Father - speak His word, speak His life into situations and see our Father move.

*"He watched over His Word to perform it."* Jeremiah 1:12

*"He confirms His Word with signs following."* Mark 16:20

As we speak His Word with confidence we will see Him do "*exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*" Ephesians 3:20.

Helen Carroll, Leadership Council

## Sunday, March 25 (Day 33)



### Luke 10:38-42

In these verses, we see Martha taking the role of hostess. Can you hear the sibling rivalry? *“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work...?”* I’m sure Martha is expecting Jesus to come to her aid with a positive answer to her question. Martha is performing a worthy task, but she’s consumed by what others are doing. Jesus doesn’t criticize her for what she’s doing but for being concerned about others’ activities. Mary, however, takes the place of a disciple by sitting at the feet of Jesus. She portrays a person willing to learn from him, while Martha’s busyness pictures someone serving him.

A disciple of Jesus needs to serve and sit and learn. There needs to be a balanced combination of two things: service and reflection. Mary shows the importance of reflection on what Jesus teaches. She was seeking the “One Thing.” It is so easy for me to relate to Martha. Who do you relate to?

Prayer: “Lord Jesus, when I become distracted by the things of this life, help me to keep in balance what I ‘do’ and ‘the time I spend with you.’ Remind me of these two sisters and that there is *‘only one thing needed’* and that is you.”

Barbara Schiro, Administrator, Director of Children’s Ministries

## Monday, March 26 (Day 34)



### Luke 15:11-32

There are three main characters in the story of the prodigal son.

**The older brother** never wanted to leave his Father’s house –life was good there and he never felt the need to go to foreign lands. Some of us are like that - blessed with deep faith and a disposition which means we rest happily in our Father’s house.

**The younger son** had all he needed, but chose to go and “live it up” in a foreign land. Some of us battle with difficult to understand teachings in the Bible or struggle with difficult situations in life and we go on a journey like the prodigal. We question and struggle and leave that which we know is good in search of something else.

**The father** must have been deeply hurt when his son left. Although the Father allowed him to leave, he never stopped loving his son and longing for his return. In the same way God is saddened when we question him, or look for fulfillment in life with other things, but He is always ready to welcome us back lovingly – that is why Jesus died for us. If in some ways you are like the older brother, try to be like the Father in dealing with the prodigals you know. Pray for those who struggle and let them know that they will always be welcome back in the Father’s house.

If you feel like the prodigal son, take comfort in the fact that God is patient with us and remember that he longs for our return. No matter what we have done, or how badly we have messed up, God waits to welcome us back.

Gareth Eagar, Worship Leader

## Tuesday, March 27 (Day 35)



### John 14:12-14

Today's reading can be as confusing to us as it was to his disciples. How easy we can despair as followers of Jesus Christ after reading this passage and compare our lives and works to the amazing life of Christ on earth. While he was on earth, Jesus caused the blind to see, healed diseases, the lame walked again, and people were brought back to life. Yet, at the end of his life he had seemingly no enduring effects. You might say it was a failure. Those who came to him were attracted to the things he did, then faded away. No one stayed with him to the end except for a few followers.

However, Jesus was not a failure. The risen Jesus had given His Spirit, the full potential of the Godhead, to those few followers who *believed*. An explosion of faith came when those few shared the Good News wherever they went. What we do in the power of the Holy Spirit will have enduring effects to the uttermost parts of the earth. When we pour out our heart in faith filled prayer, from God's perspective, there are always results. Those that are brought to Christ through our prayers, testimony and the Gospel message in the power of the Spirit **are** lasting, eternal fruit (a greater work). Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - *fruit that will last*" (John 15:16) .

Lord, thank you for the lasting work you are doing in my heart to change it to be more like Jesus. Give me a heart for the lost in my neighborhood and all the earth. Amen.

Nancy Illian, Leadership Council

## Wednesday, March 28 (Day 36)



### John 15:14-15

What is real friendship with Jesus? When you consider friendship in an earthly sense you probably think of laughter, companionship, genuine self, and support from someone you trust and who trusts you. Jesus says we are his friend if we keep his commands which we can know by reading scripture – that is trust.

Are we too quick to forget that true friends also share in heartache? Jesus gave us an example of sharing in such heartache when he went to the Garden of Gethsemane with his close friends. Matthew 26:36 says that He asked them "... remain here and keep watch with Me" while he prayed. Are you quick to doubt where Jesus' friendship is in your life when he leads into a difficult situation? He shared heartache with His friends for their benefit.

Scripture also says that "... where two or three come together in my name [Jesus], there am I [Jesus] with them" (Matthew 18:20). If you trust him as your friend, your difficult situation is a chance to grow in knowledge and friendship with Jesus and each other because he is there in the midst with you. Do you trust Him as your true friend?

Jared Bratu, Sound Ministry

## Thursday, March 29 (Day 37)



### John 16:23-24

Are there requests which are just too unimportant to ask? When people pray, "Lord, where did I leave my glasses?" is this a waste of time? No. Father God is concerned about all of the details of our lives. Luke 12:7 says "*Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*"

Are there requests that shouldn't be asked? Yes, if one is aware of a biblical principle that addresses a request such as, "May I be unfaithful to my spouse?" This is out of bounds.

How about if the answer seems obvious? If there is no biblical principle addressing an issue, then don't assume anything is obvious. In Joshua chapter 9, the leaders of Israel did not ask the Lord about a matter which seemed obvious. But they were deceived and suffered for it.

So should I pray about everything? Well, yes. But praying can be quick. You don't have to convince the Lord God of anything, or argue a case, or bow your head and close your eyes. He's right here and He loves you.

Also, are there requests which are too big for us to ask? For example, is it a waste of time to pray for world peace? No. First Timothy 2:1,2 says, "*I urge, then,...that prayers,...be made for...all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives...*"

So ask, and receive, and experience the joy of the Lord.

Larry Carroll, Former Elder

## Friday, March 30 (Day 38)



### Romans 8:14-17

One of the most amazing things in the life of a believer is the relationship we have with our God. When we become a follower of Christ, we are declared righteous and all of our sin is forgiven. We then become children of God, and he is our Father.

Romans 8:15 says, "...You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" The word "sonship" in the King James Version is translated "adoption." The God of the universe adopts us, and he becomes our Abba Father. The unique thing about adoption is that it is never an accident. Adoption is always purposeful and intentional.

Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is not a mistake. He loves us with an everlasting and unconditional love that only a father can have for his child.

Rachel Horn, Leadership Council, School of Discipleship

## Saturday, March 31 (Day 39)



### Philippians 4:6-7

In this passage, Paul and the Philippians had good reason for anxiety since Paul was in prison and the others were threatened with persecution. So, when he tells them not to worry or be anxious about anything, it is not because he makes light of their troubles, but because he knows that God is greater. He instructs them that the way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.

We know we should pray and trust God, but we can't help but wonder just what He is going to do with our situations. When we worry, we are not trusting the Lord. Worry shows a lack of faith in God and His ability to meet our needs. However, when we turn from worry and anxiety to prayer and thanksgiving, God's peace accomplishes far more than any of us can imagine. It guards our hearts and our thoughts from all despair.

Lord, please strengthen our faith and help us to put our complete trust in you when we prayerfully lay our *burdens down* before you.

Gloria Kaslander, Administrative Assistant

## Sunday, April 1 (Day 40)



### Hebrews 4:14-16

Let's look at the end of the passage first. We are encouraged to approach God's throne with confidence knowing that we "may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." And why are we confident? Why can we expect grace and mercy? Now look at the beginning. It is because we have Jesus, the perfect Son of God, as our high priest that we can have this confidence. He has lived here, has gone through the heavens, been tempted in every way, and yet was sinless. If you had a need or a problem in your life, who would you go to for advice and help? One who has had the same experience as you and has come out on the other side victorious? Or would you go to one who has no idea what you are experiencing?

So let's approach the throne boldly and with confidence that Jesus can and will help us in our time of need. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you can sympathize with us in our weaknesses and offer us grace and mercy. Amen.

Margot Klope, Connections Women's Ministry

## Monday, April 2 (Day 41)



### Hebrews 10:19-22

Hebrews 10:19 – 22 speaks clearly and wonderfully about how we, as Christian believers can experience God’s presence by approaching our loving Father in heaven with boldness and confidence. “What gives me the right to do that?” some might ask. That’s a good question, with an even better answer, because Jesus, our Savior and Lord, has opened the way for us to the Father by His shed blood. “Let all draw near” it goes on, with truthful and sincere hearts and cleansed consciences.

WHY should we “draw near” to God? The benefits of seeking and experiencing intimacy with Him go beyond ourselves to the Christian community of which we are a part. The love and faith that we gain from Him equips us to encourage one another to do the good deeds that, completing the circle, bring honor to Him. Being a part of a small group provides regular opportunities for me to love and support others, thereby feeling closer to the Lord Himself.

Andrea Beyer, Small Group Leader

## Tuesday, April 3 (Day 42)



### Hebrews 13:5-6

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

There are many places where we are taught about the love of money. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that you cannot simultaneously devote yourself to the pursuit of money and the pursuit of God (Matt 6:24). These pursuits end up conflicting with each other as we see so often in peoples lives today. He also taught about the real value of these earthly treasures that we so often want to accumulate. First, there is no lasting value beyond this world, and second, you spend much energy and time protecting and worrying that somebody will steal what you worked so hard to get (Matt 6:19).

Regarding money, our Lord certainly knows that we need resources to live here on this planet, which is why He has promised to stay at our side, helping us along the way, and not be afraid of being without what we need to live. What a joy to know that this is a promise of the One who never breaks his promises.

Jim Ruskowsky, Worship Team

## Wednesday, April 4 (Day 43)



### James 4:7-8

Our God desires us to be in fellowship with Him and to seek Him. When you read James 4:7-8 notice the strong verbs which require an action on our part. Also notice that they are not requests but commands. These verses tell us how to draw near to the Lord. We have to submit to God and humble ourselves before Him (1Peter 5:6). Resist Satan by putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18). Draw near to Him through our intercessor, His Son, Jesus (Hebrews 7:19). We must cleanse ourselves of grudges against our brothers (1Timothy 2:8). We can't be of God and the world – double minded (Jeremiah 4:14). We must purify our hearts by confessing our sins and being truly repentful (1John 1:9).

When life gets rough, remember the words of Jesus written in John 16:33 and continue to run the good race, forget the past, concentrate on the present and seek the future prize – Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14)!!! John 13:25 is a special passage of the Bible for me. It gives a vivid, visual illustration of John, the beloved apostle, leaning on the breast of Jesus. Imagine - John probably heard the heart beat of the Messiah! It is a picture of security, peace, love and oneness with the Son of God. This is where I want to be - leaning on the everlasting Lord!!!

Lynette Kiel, KidVenture Teacher

## Thursday, April 5 (Day 44)



### 1 John 5:14-15

*"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*

C.S. Lewis

Despite this quote being written many years ago, the premise hasn't changed. Our society tells us to pursue "mud pies," yet must ask ourselves: are we settling for these things? Infinite Joy and His Presence are not just at our fingertips – they are His Will for us.

What is it you desire? If our earnest prayer is for God to be glorified in and through our lives, then the things we ask for will be reflected in these values. However, if we are satisfied with mud pies, I think we would be frustrated by this passage and find it seemingly misleading. God is not a genie, bending His Will to ours. Rather the opposite should be true. What is it you are asking for?

Rich Thompson, Sound Ministry

## Friday, April 6 (Day 45)



### **Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45**

Was Good Friday a good day? On the one hand, the Lord Jesus suffered extreme torture on Good Friday. So, we understand why people say that Good Friday was a dreadful day.

On the other hand, there must be a reason it is called Good Friday, and the reason that comes to my mind is: We are now allowed into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of the most holy Lord, because of what happened that day. We enter by the blood/death of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Not only that, we are welcomed in! This is exceedingly good news! Whoever wants to come into God's presence is welcomed in!

All three of the synoptic gospels tell us that the temple curtain was torn open from top to bottom at the time of the crucifixion. This signifies that, as of that moment, the veil between God and people is no longer there.

So the first Good Friday was a tragic day, but now Good Friday is a day to celebrate! Hallelujah!

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for enabling us to come into the presence of the Lord God!

Larry Carroll, Former Elder

## Saturday, April 7 (Day 46)



### **Revelation 1:12-17**

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, turned to see the loud voice that sounded like a trumpet. I wonder if John had an inkling that the voice belonged to his friend, his Lord, his Savior. John was the only apostle still alive. All the rest were martyred, including his brother James. Still, John did not waiver in his faith, knowing God was always with him.

As I meditate on this passage, I picture John, an old man, exiled to a barren island and unable to minister to the churches who are about to face a storm of persecution. And God, in His perfect timing, reveals Himself to John as never before. As if God is saying, "My presence is undeniable." Wrapped up in these verses is Jesus our High Priest, His image one of holiness and His divine judgment upon sin. He is in the midst of the churches, securely holding them in His right hand. All John can do is fall at His feet "like a dead man." I envision our almighty Savior reaching out His hand and lifting John up saying, "Do not be afraid." Those words were not only for John but for us all.

Pattie Lukas, Small Group Leader

# Sunday, April 8 (Day 47)



## **John 20:24-31**

Jesus met Thomas at his need and revealed himself as the Victorious, Risen Savior. He answered Thomas' faith question with a very personal response. While he reminded Thomas to stop doubting, he first showed him his hands and side. Jesus does not withhold his presence from Thomas in his unbelief.

We are all like Thomas when we come to Jesus. We have doubts if Jesus can redeem us, if his sacrifice is enough to cover our sins. Ultimately it is Jesus showing us that his love is for us. He loves us. We have only to reach out and accept his love to be changed. The act of accepting Jesus' love is not a one-time act. We must continually acknowledge our sin and accept his love.

We are the "blessed" ones who have not seen yet believe. We have life in his name, life with Jesus. Life with meaning and purpose. We have life with a message of good news.

Ted Jesson, Sr. High Sunday School Leader





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