

Seeking God's Face

Praying with the Bible
through the Year

Written and compiled by Philip F. Reinders

Foreword by Eugene H. Peterson

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for the study and renewal of worship

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Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible through the Year
(compact version)

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For Owen and Lily—
answers to prayer and sources of many more—
may the gladness of the gospel make your lives a living prayer

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FOREWORD



“Wendy, do you ever pray?”

She shook her head negatively. “No. Never.” Then a shy, self-deprecating smile played at the edges of her lips. “Sometimes I wish upwards.”

I didn’t know Wendy very well. I had married her and Jacob, a young man who was a member of my congregation, six months earlier. I met with them three or four times for conversations about marriage and their understanding and expectations of it. I remembered that Wendy was quite open about having no Christian commitment and only the sketchiest acquaintance with church. They were both immature. I asked them if and when they found difficulties in their relationship that they come back and talk with me.

Now she was back. I hadn’t seen her or Jacob since the day of the wedding. Things were not going well with their marriage; I wasn’t surprised. I suggested a marriage counselor that I trusted.

“Wendy, marriage is wonderful but complex, and being human is complex—a lot of things can go wrong. You and Jacob aren’t doing too well on your own. Dr. Shelly would be a good companion with you as you learn how to understand and give yourselves to one another. You probably ought to think in terms of several months.”

She wanted me to tell her what she could do on her own. She wasn’t interested in “several months.” I never saw her again.

But her sentence, “Sometimes I wish upwards,” stayed with me. It burrowed into my imagination and has lodged there ever since as a wonderful naming of what I began to think of as “pre-prayer”—a spontaneous response “upwards” out of the self-enclosed nature to meaning or fulfillment, or, who knows, God?

“Sometimes I wish upwards” is a nudge towards prayer, an opening crack of a door into mystery, a seed that if nurtured could soon

become prayer. I am convinced that everyone wishes upwards sometimes, maybe even often. The wish upwards is evidence, I've come to think, that everyone has the stuff within them, the capacity, even the longing, to be a person of prayer. But also, more often than not, nothing comes of it. The wish has no root in relationship, in language, in love, in God.

The life of prayer doesn't start from scratch. The wish upwards is evidence of a readiness to pray. But how do we get from wish to prayer? How do we get the elusive, wispy, insubstantial wish embodied into actual prayer?

This book, *Seeking God's Face*, is one way. The Christian community in every generation has written and published daily prayer books to accomplish this transition among men and women, followers of Jesus, who want their relation with God and their family and friends and neighbors to be something more than a wish upwards.

Daily prayer books take different forms and enter into different cultures and times, but most of them share certain essential characteristics that provide congenial conditions for developing a life of mature prayer, no longer praying by fits and starts, "clouds without rain . . . autumn trees, without fruit . . . wild waves of the sea . . . wandering stars . . ." (Jude 12-13).

Seeking God's Face melds prayer and Scripture into a companionable guide for becoming a participant—both listening and speaking—in the great salvation conversation that is the Christian gospel.

Prayer. Prayer is as natural and simple as language itself. The only difference between prayer and our mother tongue as we commonly use it is that in prayer God is a major voice. We all learn language without formal instruction. We are wondrously created with all the bodily parts in throat and mouth and ears that are necessary to speak and listen. A prayer book respects this basic and elementary at-home-ness, this aptitude that we all have for prayer. A prayer book is not a book about prayer, not an explanation of prayer, not a theological essay on prayer. It is prayers, usually brief, to be prayed.

Prayer is a natural and authentic substratum of language. But there is irony here: prayer, language at its most honest, is also the easiest form of language to fake. We discover early on that we can pretend to pray, use the words of prayer, practice the forms of prayer, assume postures of prayer, acquire a reputation for prayer, and never pray. Our “prayers,” so called, become a camouflage to cover up a life of nonprayer.

Set prayers are prayers provided for us to keep our praying in company with our ancestors, prayers of others so that we stay in touch with the authentic world of prayer revealed in our Scriptures. They are prayers that we can use to distinguish prayer from prayer impostors, fantasy, and magic. They are prayers that do not depend on our own initiative, prayers that don't wax and wane according to the phases of our moods.

In my home, a great deal of our common life is integrated into preparing meals, considering the tastes and circumstances of those who will be present, setting the table, eating the meal, cleaning up after the meal. No single meal is quite like another. They are many variables: the kinds of food that make up the meal, which members of the family will be there, guests that we anticipate. We enjoy the work. But occasionally we run out of energy and imagination. When that happens, we drive a few miles to a favorite restaurant in order to have someone else do it for us: shop for the food and prepare it, set the table, serve the meal, clear the table, and wash the dishes. A “set” meal: someone else whom we trust does it all for us. All we have to do is pick up the fork that has been set before us, eat the meal that has been set in place, and leave the cleanup to others.

When we are young children, all our meals are set meals, set before us without thought or preparation on our part. Gradually we learn to do it for ourselves and for others as we grow up. But it is still nice to have someone do the work for us when we are tired or without appetite. The analogy to prayer is not exact but it is close enough in this context.

The classic set prayers for Christians and Jews are the psalms. And the most prayed prayer in the church is a set prayer, the Lord's Prayer: “Pray then like this . . .”

Scripture. All prayer is language—language in conversation, conversation between God and us. The most frequent distortion of prayer takes place when we fail to listen to God’s Word to us. We do all the talking, demanding that God do all the listening.

Scripture provides the major way in which God speaks to us. Scripture is a huge story with many voices, but the primary voice is God’s voice. God has the first word. If we are going to get the story straight, it is important that we let God have the first word, and really listen; I mean *really* listen. Jesus’ story of the soils is a story about prayer: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

So if listening is required, silence is indispensable. Silence is a commonly overlooked element of language in general, but it must not be. Especially it must not be overlooked in the language of prayer. It is not as if the Old Testament prophets and poets and the New Testament apostles and Jesus—mainly Jesus, “the Word made flesh”—speak the revelation of God to us, and now in prayer we get to say our piece. Silence in prayer, which consists mostly in attentive listening, is nonnegotiable. Listening, which necessarily requires silence on our part, is as much a part of language as words. The colon and the semicolon, the comma and the period—all of which insist on silence as part and parcel of speech—are as essential to language as nouns and verbs. But more often than not, silence gets short shrift in our prayers. Yet if there is no silence, our speech degenerates into babble.

“But God doesn’t answer. Why don’t I get any answer?” It is the most frequent complaint regarding prayer. The obvious response is “Are you listening? Have you spent as much time listening as you have speaking?”

Only out of disciplined, quiet, attentive listening is it possible then to answer God’s speech in free prayers, unscripted—not “set” this time—prayers responding to the story. We can respond as participants, as we experience our story being assimilated into God’s story. “Let your Bibles become all autobiographical” is the way one pastor, Alexander Whyte, put it.

For Scripture is not basically a book of information in which we learn about “the furniture of heaven and the temperature of hell.” It is not for the most part a history book in which we learn all about

the cultures of the ancient East. And it certainly is not a science text in which we are instructed in the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It is a conversation between God and God's people—us. God creating us and God saving us, while we are given generous time to speak our belief and doubt, our praise and pain—whatever—and while we take our place in this marvelous story that comes together in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Eugene H. Peterson
Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology
Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

INTRODUCTION



We are creatures of habit. Knowingly, perhaps mostly instinctively, we crave and create meaningful patterns to our living. It's so mundane we miss it—three religiously observed square meals, meticulous hygiene rhythms, the morning ritual of making and savoring the first cup of coffee, a kiss to loved ones as you head out the door, habitual email checks, the exercise regimen or daily walk, watching the evening news or catching up online. All are pieces to the daily puzzle of ordering our days, and we notice when one is missing.

Like the God who created us, we nail down the disorder of our day into a framework of meaning. We simply can't enjoy the freedom of life without a form, some skeletal structure on which to hang the flesh of our days. This dynamic operates not only in everyday living but also as we walk out our faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer is an essential part of that faith, communing with the God we love. But a frustrated prayer life has to rank as one of the more universal Christian experiences. What's behind this struggle? We're not opposed to prayer; we have plenty of need to pray to God; we're interested. Yet so few of us pray well.

Part of our struggle is that we lack a suitable form for praying. Many of us have picked up the idea that only spontaneous prayers are authentic, that we can't use the words of someone else to honestly pray to God. We figure prayer should be like musical improvisation, something spontaneous and free. Of course, only the most accomplished musicians can improvise, after mastering the musical forms and structures that set in place the foundation for improvisation. Likewise in prayer, we find a freedom and depth in our communion with God as we learn the words and forms that help us commune with God. For beginners in prayer (including most of us), we need to develop an adequate way to carry our prayers to God.

But there's more to our struggle with the practice of prayer. The simple truth is we've oriented our lives around other practices. We've already created a form for our lives and have conformed our living to work deadlines, the pace of parenting, school schedules, media rhythms, and soccer practices. These can be good, and yet the pattern of this world can sabotage a life of prayer—and to live without prayer is to be deformed, no longer conformed to Christ.

But all is not lost. We've at least shown the capacity to form some habits, to practice regular routines. The beginnings of a healthy life of prayer are sometimes found in understanding the habit or practice-nature of much of the Christian life.

Part of God's salvation work in us is to conform our lives to the likeness of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 8:29). Following Jesus, the Way, involves finding and living a new way of life. Conversion is a change of mind as well as practice, a new direction and new habit of being.

Living as a disciple of Jesus is nothing less than a new way of thinking and believing, and yet it is so much more. Christian beliefs open up a whole new world, the kingdom of God. How do we step into and inhabit the kingdom of God? We need a *habitus*, a Jesus way of being, a Christ way of life. And that *habitus*, or way, is composed of regular habits and practices that give intentional and embodied shape to our living.

One of the most basic Christian practices as we live into God's kingdom and live out the way of Jesus is that of a regular prayer rhythm. *Seeking God's Face* is a guide to developing and practicing the habit of daily prayer through a fixed, common prayer.

Let me explain that a bit, because it might be new to some. For many of us, prayer is a clearly defined activity—it's what you do when you close your eyes, fold your hands, and silently speak to God. But Christian prayer can be a far richer conversation with God, a back-and-forth exchange of speaking and listening, through Scripture, quiet listening, and personal address.

For centuries, Christians have practiced a form of prayer called a "daily office." The office is the practice of praying at fixed times throughout the day, most fully developed in Benedictine monas-

teries as a way to structure the day around prayer. There were seven separate times of prayer, centered on Scripture and set prayers. Variations of these offices have been developed over the years, including vesper services, books of common prayer, or even mealtime prayers or devotions. All are forms of this prayer office, a way to get prayer into the rhythm of our daily lives.

This book flows out of that practice, but in a much simplified form, using a fixed and common prayer meant to be prayed once per day at a time of your choosing (more on how to use this prayer book later). But let's think about this practice—a fixed and common conversation with God—and how it might shape our lives.

Fixed—that the prayers are fixed means they are to be prayed at a certain time of the day (that's yours to figure out). At some time in our heavily scheduled lives, we choose to set aside time from our activity to commune with God. We are so shaped by our clocks and calendars that we're easily persuaded our days are measured by the physics of planetary revolutions and rotations around the sun. By setting aside a fixed time to pray, we interrupt our regular rhythms, reminding ourselves that our lives are oriented around the Son, Jesus Christ, that life is measured by grace and shaped by the life of Jesus.

"Fixed" also refers to set Scriptures and prayers. Many of us are not familiar with using set prayers, preferring extemporaneous praying. But sometimes we just feel flat, like there is nothing flowing in our hearts. Does that mean we can't pray? Is our relationship with God dictated by our feelings? No. We can allow Scripture passages we didn't choose and the words of others to lead us deeper into communion with God.

Common—our culture is so deeply formed by an individualistic ethos, which has imprinted our faith as well. We're pretty much convinced we can follow Jesus solo, that our individual spiritual experience is paramount to our faith. A practice of common prayer, sharing words with other Jesus followers (who may not be physically present but are praying the same Scripture and prayers on the same day) begins to root us more deeply in Christian community. Common prayer interrupts our privatized faith and reminds us

that we can't do this alone, that we find ourselves in the company of others who share this journey with Jesus.

Conversation with God—how often do we fly through the day without a thought towards God or how faith might intersect our living? A practice of intentionally setting aside time and space presses the pause button on the blur of busyness to open a space and time to seek God's face. It expresses, in an embodied way, our intention to live life in the presence of God. In our prayers we bring our lives to God and pay attention to God's Word, listening for the living voice of God in the Bible, allowing it to read our lives.

This is all for a larger purpose. You don't practice scales simply for the joy of hearing them; you practice to play beautiful music. We practice prayer so that we might know and follow Jesus, which is, of course, to be out in the world, engaged in God's mission. That task is sometimes difficult and demanding, and a regular practice of prayer keeps us alive and well while we serve the world in the name of Jesus.

My secret hope is for this prayer book to be part of a resurgence in God's mission, to help catalyze a new order of sent Jesus-people, shaped by God and living out the good news of the kingdom in their local communities. I'm praying and hoping that a renewed practice of prayer, along with many other of the Christian spiritual practices, will be conduits for the explosive power of the gospel, for a renewed commitment and energy for Christ and his cause.

HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER BOOK



Each day of prayer contains a number of different elements—an invitation into God's presence, times of quiet, Scripture, free prayer, a set prayer, and a closing blessing. All of this is meant to be experienced as prayer. We may not be used to this way of praying, but think of it as an extended conversation with God—God invites you to be with him; you quietly enjoy his presence, listen to his Word, and respond to him with the reality of your life; and God sends you with his blessing.

Of course, there is freedom within this form. Centuries ago English cleric William Law captured the right balance between our need of a form for prayer and yet the freedom we can enjoy in prayer to follow promptings from the Holy Spirit. His helpful direction is that most “Christians ought to use forms of prayer at all the regular times of prayer. It seems right for every one to begin with a form of prayer. If, in the midst of his devotions, he finds his heart ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotions, he should leave his form for a while and follow those fervors of his heart, till it again wants the assistance of his usual petitions.”¹

I've attempted to make daily prayer simple. That doesn't mean easy, just uncomplicated. I've often been frustrated with more complex and liturgical prayer books that require flipping pages, finding the right dates, and hunting down portions of Scripture. The mechanics of such over-involved praying became a barrier to actual prayer for me. I've tried to avoid that in this book and have everything you need for one day's prayer on one page.

I'm assuming that most of us don't have the luxury of stopping several times a day for fixed prayer. Instead, I've tried to create a simple office that can be prayed in one session. The time you take can vary, but I hope that you'll leisurely enjoy God's presence;

¹ William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1948), p. 91.

don't race through it, but linger with God. I'd suggest you start by carving out twenty minutes for each day. But see how you might expand that time, enjoying the quiet, dwelling in God's Word. And do think about setting up a regular time to pray. Pick out the time of day when you are most alert and available to God.

I imagine you will do this privately, on your own. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you won't be distracted. But consider this hopeful thought—there may be many others who will be praying with you. If we all pray this daily office together, we may do so privately and yet be connected as a wide community of prayer. Perhaps it might be good to find a local group of people to form a small community centered on praying this office together. You can pray it on your own and yet know that each person is also praying the same prayers and meditating on the same Scriptures—that might help shape coffee conversations or online chats you have throughout the week.

On a macro level, the prayer book follows the seasons and celebrations of the Christian calendar—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time (there's a brief introduction to each season at the beginning of that particular section). The intention in following this calendar is to mark our time with Jesus, taking our lives and placing them in the story of Jesus, allowing the shape and rhythm of his life to shape our days.

You'll notice a box near the beginning of each prayer entry. Since Christian seasons and holidays are not bound to our calendar, they move around from year to year. The box is a simple way for you to find the corresponding calendar date on which to pray your daily prayer.

Within each of the seasons, each day of prayer is a complete “office” to pray. Each day contains a number of elements for you to pray with, either quietly or aloud. Again, consider the whole time as prayer, a gentle conversation with the God who loves you.

Invitation: we begin our prayers invited into God's presence, welcomed into all the reality of the kingdom, of which we are so often unaware. The invitation is a way to open ourselves to the greater gospel reality, to become mindful of God's presence.

Quiet: there are two specific places where you're encouraged to quiet your heart and mind, to enjoy stillness before God. We hardly know what to do with silence in our wired world, with constant communications intruding into our lives. For us to hear God's voice, we must regularly practice silence. Cultivating a stilled, attentive heart before God and quieting down actual noise and internal noise is a vital step in preparing to hear God's voice. You can start with a brief period of silence, but experiment and challenge yourself with longer times of quiet.

Bible Song: each day there will be a psalm to pray. The Psalms have always been the prayer book of God's people—the "school of prayer," as Augustine called them, teaching us to respond to God. We'll be praying a different psalm each day, working our way through the 150 psalms twice in one year. During some seasons, however, we'll focus on a few specific psalms for the season.

Allow the psalm to speak for you or expand your worship of God. There will be times when a psalm does not match or connect with your immediate experience—you may hit a psalm of praise during a difficult time, a lament on a spring day bursting with life. Allow the psalm to move you beyond your immediate reality and experience, deeper into God's reality. And remember you are praying with a wide community of Christians—a specific day's psalm may not fit your circumstance, but it is expressing someone else's experience. Perhaps someone in your church or neighborhood is going through what the psalm is expressing. And it's likely something you'll go through one day, so go to school now and learn how to respond to God with a full range of emotion.

Bible Reading: every day has a further reading from the Bible, a word from God. The Bible readings will follow the particular season, allowing us to read through the story of God's salvation. This is not a time to exegete the text or to read it for information, but to listen for God's voice for you, to allow God's Word to address your life.

Dwelling: this part of the prayer time may be a new way for you to encounter God's Word and listen for his voice. It's rooted in the ancient Christian tradition called *lectio divina*, which is simply a way to read the Bible, slowly, contemplatively, and leisurely, not

seeking information but to hear the personal address of God. *Lectio divina* assumes that prayer is a two-way conversation and enables us to dialogue with Jesus by hearing and responding to the Word of God.

We're used to studying the Bible, analyzing it for truths to understand or mining it for lessons to live out, but we are mostly unschooled in listening to it. The goal of *lectio divina* is to grow in companionship with God, to be a personal participant in the story of God, lovingly listening for God's Word, allowing the text to get into us and read our lives.

How does that happen? Each day there are a series of brief instructions to lead you through this way of listening to Scripture. But let me offer a quick overview.

First, quiet yourself so that you can hear God. Then simply read the Scripture, preferably aloud and slowly. As you do this, listen for the word that addresses you—a word, thought, phrase, or image that grabs your attention, that jumps off the page for you. Don't analyze it or study it, but simply receive this word. (Turn aside any doubts about whether this is God or your imagination; trust that God desires to be in conversation with you and is addressing you.) Then read through the same passage again and listen for the way this word connects with your life. Reflect on how God is addressing your life. Next, enter into conversation with God. Honestly offer to him any feelings this text has surfaced in you, any resistance you feel, any comfort you sense. Ask Jesus, "Why did you give me this word today?" And then, finally, let this word sink deep into your life. Yield yourself to God's direction and leading; rest in his presence.

Free Prayer: as a part of the prayer time, there's opportunity for you to speak your heart to God in a time of free prayer, bringing to God the needs and concerns of your life, family, work, and church. It may seem like an oxymoron, but I've added a few suggested prayer items for the free prayer, in case you are stuck or would like to pray for something in addition to your personal needs.²

² I'm indebted to David Adam's *The Rhythm of Life*. (Harrisburg, Penn.: Morehouse Publishing, 1996) for the idea, and to *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2004) for some of the prayer requests.

The suggested free prayer items are focused in a weekly flow of seven daily groupings—Sunday: the resurrection of Jesus and our experience of the risen Jesus; Monday: the created world and our stewardship of it; Tuesday: the incarnation of Jesus and our living out the faith; Wednesday: the world and our local communities; Thursday: the Holy Spirit and spiritual renewal; Friday: the cross of Christ and those who suffer; and Saturday: the Church and our local church family. Each week (usually Sunday) we'll also pray the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: following the free prayer is a set prayer. Each of these prayers is rooted in a Reformed confession of faith.³ The Reformed confessions are a full and rich theological foundation for the Christian life—thoughtful and soul-nourishing. This is God-reality named clearly. They remain a convincing testimony, deep wisdom to be cherished and absorbed.

But for many people I've met in my pastoral work, both Christians and non-Christians, these confessions seem to have a diminished capacity to connect. The theology remains as relevant as ever, but whether it's the catechetical format, the historical distance, or the language, the confessions seem removed from people's experience and daily lives.

So why not take the living theology that feels remote and bring it close by folding it into the most basic Christian activity of prayer? In these prayers, the content of faith is turned God-ward; it is Christian theology in a kneeling posture. Like honest prayer, sometimes the confessions question or lament, and other times they confess and praise, bringing all of our lives before the face of God.

These historical confessions have provided Christians with a place to stand firm, but they also give us a place to humbly kneel. In fact, those two postures are deeply connected; our personal creed, what we believe, is found and formed in what and how we pray (the Latin motto *lex orandi, lex credendi*). If we can begin to weave these core Christian beliefs into our prayers, most likely we'll find

³ The set prayers flow out of the Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Confession, or Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Some are word for word renditions, others a prayerful paraphrase, and still others a riff on a phrase or thought from the confessions.

them trickling into our minds, embedded in our hearts, and lived out in our lives.

For some of us, this form of set prayer may be foreign and feel a little stiff. Accept those feelings and yet try to stick with it, allowing the prayers to give a larger voice to your spirit and to grow a fuller prayer life.

Blessing: The time of prayer closes with a final blessing, reminding us of God's good intentions for our lives, sending us out knowing we live in the context of grace.

Enough talk about prayer; now go and seek God's face in prayer. Commune with Father, Son, and Spirit, and give my greetings to God.

Key to Abbreviations

<i>Example</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
BC 2	Belgic Confession, Article 2
CD 1.9	Canons of Dort, First Point, Article 9
HC 5	Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 5
WC 8.2	Westminster Confession, Chapter 8, Point 2
WLC 6	Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 6
WSC 7	Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q&A 7

ORDINARY TIME



Introduction

The first half of the Christian year, ranging from Advent to Pentecost, is devoted to tracing the grand arc of God's saving action in Jesus Christ. The second half of the Christian year is a long stretch of time called Ordinary Time. It starts the day after Pentecost Sunday and leads right up to the first Sunday in Advent, meaning that most of the year is spent here. (Some traditions also include the days after Epiphany and before Lent as Ordinary Time.)

With all the big holidays and celebrations over, Ordinary Time offers us the space to find our place in God's story. We've celebrated and taken in the momentous life of Jesus; now we need a long stretch of days to absorb and assimilate it. In Ordinary Time, we fully take in the gospel, allowing it to take shape in our daily living, making connections between Jesus' story and our lives.

"Ordinary" doesn't mean boring or second-rate but simply "everyday." The Christian faith is not an otherworldly faith; it's about this creation, your life, these days. Ordinary Time gives us the space to consider all the implications of God's salvation in Jesus Christ for our day by day, week-in, week-out lives.

As such, it is a time of listening to the story of God's people. In the months of Ordinary Time, we'll trace out the larger story of God's salvation that prepared for Jesus' coming and flowed from his life, death, and resurrection. It's a time to walk through the history of God's salvation in Israel and the church.

Ordinary Time has a variable length, so there may be more days than you need in a particular year.

At the end of Ordinary Time you will find Christ the King Sunday. This date marks the last Sunday in Ordinary Time. Watch the dates and look for the reminder to jump to Christ the King Sunday for the last week of Ordinary Time.

7/1/2011
6/15/2012
6/7/2013
6/27/2014
6/12/2015
6/3/2016
6/23/2017
6/8/2018
6/28/2019
6/19/2020
6/11/2021
6/24/2022
6/16/2023
6/7/2024
6/27/2025
6/12/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 6



INVITATION

*“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people
live together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 132:1-5, 13-16

LORD, remember David
and all his self-denial.

He swore an oath to the LORD
and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:
“I will not enter my house
or go to my bed,
I will allow no sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
till I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.” . . .

For the LORD has chosen Zion,
he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,
“This is my resting place for ever and ever;
here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.
I will bless her with abundant provisions;
her poor I will satisfy with food.
I will clothe her priests with salvation,
and her faithful people will ever sing for joy.

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 12:1-2, 9-16

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then

you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. . . .

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not think you are superior.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for deep gratitude for the cross of Jesus Christ
- ❖ for those living in poverty and suffering injustice
- ❖ for the equality of women in every sphere

PRAYER

Loving Father, how quickly we can become discouraged about your church, especially when we measure it by attendance, political influence, budget, or programs. Free us from trying to size up your church by the pattern of this world. Instead, keep us in your way of simple service and humble love, energized in your mission, always encouraged, knowing your hands guide and keep your people. Amen. (BC 27)

BLESSING

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Eph. 3:16-17)

7/2/2011

6/16/2012

6/8/2013

6/28/2014

6/13/2015

6/4/2016

6/24/2017

6/9/2018

6/29/2019

6/20/2020

6/12/2021

6/25/2022

6/17/2023

6/8/2024

6/28/2025

6/13/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 7



INVITATION

*“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people
live together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 133

How good and pleasant it is
when God’s people live together in unity!

It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron’s beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.

For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 13:8-12

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the church to work for the common benefit of all people
- ❖ for deep care, bold love, and rich community to be experienced in the church
- ❖ for those who are seeking work or choosing a career path

PRAYER

Compelling Lord and Savior, thank you for the beauty of a gospel-centered life. Your kingdom-calling isn't that we merely avoid evil and keep our noses clean, but that we work for the good of those around us. So plunge us deep into gospel living in our neighborhoods, exhibiting a patient, peace-loving, gentle life of love that protects others and seeks the good of all, even our enemies. Amen. (HC 107)

BLESSING

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Eph. 3:16-17)

Week 4

7/3/2011

6/17/2012

6/9/2013

6/29/2014

6/14/2015

6/5/2016

6/25/2017

6/10/2018

6/30/2019

6/21/2020

6/13/2021

6/26/2022

6/18/2023

6/9/2024

6/29/2025

6/14/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 1



INVITATION

*“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD
loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 134

Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD
who minister by night in the house of the LORD.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary
and praise the LORD.

May the LORD bless you from Zion,
he who is the Maker of heaven and earth.

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 1:6-10

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let that person be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let that person be under God’s curse!

Am I now trying to win human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for resurrection hope and joy
- ❖ for sharing the good news of the living Jesus
- ❖ for those suffering from oppression and war

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER

God, when I count on my pious actions to make me right with you, I get the gospel confused. I'm flattering myself, relying on my capacity to gain your approval. Today, help me first to trust only in Jesus, transferring my heart's confidence to him and so making mine all of his satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness. Amen. (HC 61)

BLESSING

May you be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11)

7/4/2011

6/18/2012

6/10/2013

6/30/2014

6/15/2015

6/6/2016

6/26/2017

6/11/2018

7/1/2019

6/22/2020

6/14/2021

6/27/2022

6/19/2023

6/10/2024

6/30/2025

6/15/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 2



INVITATION

*“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD
loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 135:1-5

Praise the LORD.

Praise the name of the LORD;

praise him, you servants of the LORD,
you who minister in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.

For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own,
Israel to be his treasured possession.

I know that the LORD is great,
that our Lord is greater than all gods.

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 2:15-21

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for wise stewardship of our physical resources
- ❖ for creative new conservation technologies and strategies
- ❖ for the leaders of the church

PRAYER

Blunt God, you don't leave any wiggle room on this one, do you? Either the salvation you offer is all in Christ or it is not in Christ at all. I love Jesus, but sometimes I find a hybrid gospel appealing, adding some current spirituality to faith in Jesus, topping the gospel with my hard work or winning personality, augmenting grace with my pleasant idols. Confront me again with the unvarnished truth that my salvation is in Christ alone. Amen. (BC 22)

BLESSING

May you be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:11)

7/5/2011
6/19/2012
6/11/2013
7/1/2014
6/16/2015
6/7/2016
6/27/2017
6/12/2018
7/2/2019
6/23/2020
6/15/2021
6/28/2022
6/20/2023
6/11/2024
7/1/2025
6/16/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 3



INVITATION

*“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD
loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 136:1-4, 23-26

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

to him who alone does great wonders,

His love endures forever. . . .

He remembered us in our low estate

His love endures forever.

and freed us from our enemies.

His love endures forever.

He gives food to every creature.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever.

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 3:1-3, 10-14

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? . . .

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because “the righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “Whoever does these things will live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Become aware of God’s loving presence and read again . . . what in God’s Word has caught your heart’s attention? Is there a command to be obeyed, a comfort to be savored? Talk to God about the Scripture you’ve just read . . . yield yourself to God and enjoy his presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for a love of and commitment to the communities in which God has placed us
- ❖ for God to equip us to serve in uniquely Christian ways in the public arena
- ❖ for police, firefighters, and other emergency workers

PRAYER

Complete God, who wants a partial Savior? And yet we hedge our bets, often trying to add something else to Jesus, as if he’s only half a Savior, as if something else will make us more spiritual, more holy, more acceptable to you. Forgive us for what this is, a trampling on your grace. Give us the faith to rest in your complete salvation in Jesus. Amen. (BC 22)

BLESSING

May you be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:11)

7/6/2011

6/20/2012

6/12/2013

7/2/2014

6/17/2015

6/8/2016

6/28/2017

6/13/2018

7/3/2019

6/24/2020

6/16/2021

6/29/2022

6/21/2023

6/12/2024

7/2/2025

6/17/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 4



INVITATION

*“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD
loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 137:1-4, 7-9

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.

There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land? . . .

Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.

“Tear it down,” they cried,
“tear it down to its foundations!”
Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy are those who repay you
according to what you have done to us.
Happy are those who seize your infants
and dash them against the rocks.

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 3:26-4:7

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you

belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What I am saying is that as long as heirs are underage they are no different from slaves, although they own the whole estate. They are subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by their fathers. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer slaves, but God's children; and since you are his children, he has made you also heirs.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for governments, world leaders, and the needs of our world
- ❖ for the continent of South America
- ❖ for military personnel and peacekeepers

PRAYER

Adopting God, thank you for being not only the all-knowing architect of space and history but also my loving Father. You have made space in your heart for me, and I am embraced as your child. I praise you for the wonder that you have chosen me, that I have been brought in from the outside—acceptable, accepted, and loved in Christ. In Jesus' name, amen. (WLC 74)

BLESSING

May you be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11)

7/7/2011

6/21/2012

6/13/2013

7/3/2014

6/18/2015

6/9/2016

6/29/2017

6/14/2018

7/4/2019

6/25/2020

6/17/2021

6/30/2022

6/22/2023

6/13/2024

7/3/2025

6/18/2026

ORDINARY TIME—DAY 5



INVITATION

*“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD
loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 138:1-3, 6-8

I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.
I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.
When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me. . . .

Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly,
but he takes notice of the proud from afar.
Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.
You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.
The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures forever—
do not abandon the works of your hands.

BIBLE READING: GALATIANS 5:1-6

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated

to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for growth in holiness
- ❖ for God to uncover the idols of our hearts
- ❖ for God's forgiveness, and for the readiness to extend it to others

PRAYER

Mighty God, remind me today that faith is a verb, an active trust in Jesus. I don't want a coffee-table faith that's mostly display, a Sunday-only faith that's limited piety, or a bookish faith that only lives in my head. Give me a faith that lives and breathes and walks out the door into everyday life, carrying with it joy, peace, and love for all, always trusting in what Jesus has done for me. In his name, amen. (WC 11.2)

BLESSING

May you be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11)

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