

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

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

LENTEN STUDY GUIDE



Come to Me

A Series on The Lord's Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Before Lent was the tradition we understand today, an opportunity for church members to repent and seek spiritual renewal, it had a different meaning. Originally, Lent was understood as an intense season of preparation for “Catechumens” (converts under training) who were preparing to be baptized on Easter. The church would walk with these new believers by encouraging, supporting, and praying for them towards the greatest of celebrations: Easter Sunday. This year, as a church we’re taking that 40-day journey of Lent alongside those of us who are preparing to be baptized.

To be baptized is to declare a dependence on the King, Jesus Christ. We declare that through his life, death, and resurrection we have brought into his family; sons and daughters for all eternity. This dependence is not only a one-time declaration for salvation, but a daily dependence on his Spirit, the Bible, and the church body of which we are a part. Therefore, our Lenten journey will coincide with our Sermon series on The Lord’s Prayer and focus on deepening our dependence on our Good Father.

As we walk these 40 days to Easter Sunday, this devotional is designed to assist us in the journey. The Scripture verses, questions, prayers, and quotes are a resource to carve out time each day where you’re seeking God through prayer.

In addition, as we’re growing in prayer throughout this season, our hope is that it will result in all of us inviting our “love ones” (the lingo we use at Vintage Church for those in our lives who don’t know Jesus) to join us on Easter. And what if – just imagine – they responded in faith on that day and were baptized? How our church and all of heaven will rejoice! Let’s believe in God and go to him on behalf of our love one!

DAY ONE – THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

As we take this journey of prayer together, here is the model that each week will follow:

We will pray through five phases each week, including Adoration, Confession, Petition, Thanksgiving, and Charge & Benediction.

ADORATION is where we declare to God and remind ourselves and our hearts that there is no one like God; that he is sovereign and reigns over everything. These are prayers of exaltation and expressions of love to God for who he is and what he's done.

CONFESSION is where we acknowledge the choices we make that are unlike Jesus. This allows us to repent, or turn back, to God. When we do this, instead of experiencing guilt and shame, we remember that Jesus has erased the power of sin, and through him, we are completely forgiven and covered in his grace. This kind of prayer helps remind us of the ways that the Holy Spirit is healing us bit by bit and shaping us to be more like Jesus.

PETITION is a sweet and humbling time in prayer. It is important to remember that petition is not merely a time for us to rattle off a wish list of gifts we'd like from God our Father, yet it's just as important to remember that God is absolutely a generous giver. Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 7: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" During these prayers of petition, we come to our Father and practice true dependence in a bold way. Ask the Father for the things you need. Ask him for help. Ask him for guidance. Jesus models this for us all throughout the Gospels, as we will see throughout this journey in the season of Lent together.

THANKSGIVING prayers can feel a bit more straightforward. Throughout this guide, prayers of thanksgiving will be

contextualized differently, and it is crucial to continually orient our hearts and attitudes to a habit of gratitude. Author Melody Beattie puts it this way: “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.”

CHARGE & BENEDICTION is meant to simultaneously be a word of encouragement, as well as a challenge to action. These are prayers focused on us taking steps forward and putting prayer into action. As we end each week in this posture, our hope is that this journey of prayer continues to deepen our faith and stir us to action, not just thought, in our lives, our families, our cities, and the world around us.

As we prepare for week one, take time today and make a sentence-prayer for each phase listed below.

Adoration

Finish this sentence. “God, you are _____.”

Continue to praise God for who he is and what he’s done.

Confession

Open up about any habits or choices that are misaligned with the heart of Jesus. Hand these over to him and receive healing.

Petition

Ask God to guide you on this journey of prayer through the season of Lent. Ask for the things you need. Ask for a release of the blessings and gifts that God has for you.

Thanksgiving

Reflect on the material, circumstantial, and relational blessings that you enjoy in your life. Express gratitude to God for his

generosity, and ask him to awaken you from taking anything for granted.

Charge & Benediction

Throughout this guide, we will leave you each week with a blessing and prayer you may have heard before. Receive this is a blessing over you, but also as a challenge to step into prayer and action as we join together on this journey.

Today's benediction comes to us from Numbers 6 – the blessing that God dictates to Moses that Aaron and his sons are meant to speak over the nation of Israel:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.*

DAY TWO – FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Progress through the same five prayer-phases from yesterday. As week one of Lent approaches, this will help familiarize you with the flow of each week.

As an exercise of preparation, take a moment in this prayer time to consider what time you will set aside each day to spend in this guide. It's always easy to keep up in the beginning, but without planning ahead, unforeseen life events can easily derail a new habit or discipline. If you can, use a calendar or planner of some kind to set aside 10-15 minutes a day to go through each day of this Lenten Prayer Guide.

Once you set aside your weekday time, consider your weekends. The guide doesn't provide material for these days, so they'll be more independent, but this doesn't mean they're not as important. During this time, we recommend that you go back to the element of the Lord's Prayer that is focused on during each respective week. Saturday will be the end of the week before moving onto the next phrase. Pray that week's phrase and meditate on it. It may be deeply helpful to write or type out your prayers during this time, and let it be the culmination of what you learned each week, and what prayers are still standing out to you. The Holy Spirit may be pressing on these prayers for a reason.

DAY THREE – SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29

For our first Saturday in this journey, pray through the entirety of the Lord's Prayer. We are so excited to join together as all of Vintage Church in this guide. As you pray each day, know that you're part of a church family that's doing so alongside you and for you. May the Lord our God, who hears and delights in our prayers, bless you and minister to you deeply in this time.

Matthew 6:5-13

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

WEEK 1

MONDAY – ADORATION

Begin by reading Psalm 145.

Prayer must be about God. God in his self-sufficiency and love created us and pursued sinful us to the point of sacrificing Jesus, so that we could have access to his very throne where we can worship and adore him. He is the one to whom we pray, he is the one who gives us access to himself, and he is the subject about which we pray. Prayer must be about God.

We err when think prayer is about us. We call self-centeredness sin, and rightly so. We look at the culture in which we live and see an unhealthy emphasis on self – we are right to assess it as unhealthy. Unfortunately, the church is being influenced negatively by the me-first culture. This shift of centrality directly affects one’s approach to prayer. We wonder – what do I need to say? What formula must I follow? What magical incantation must I recite in order to get what I want? Prayers of adoration shift our centeredness back Jesus. Ole Hallesby describes this as “self-forgetting adoration.”¹ When we focus on and adore Jesus, our selves become strangely dim.

When Jesus teaches us to pray, he begins with centralizing prayer on who God is. **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”** Prayer must be centered on who God is. The psalms are a great guide for prayer. Often the psalmist begins by praising God for who he is, and never even arrives at asking him for anything. Prayer throughout the psalms is a God-centric activity. Michael Reeves says, “When you default to thinking of prayer as an abstract activity, a ‘thing to do’, the tendency is to focus on the prayer as an abstract activity – which makes it boring. Instead, focus on the one to whom you’re praying. That’s what happens in the psalms – they constantly interrupt their own petitions to speak of the Lord’s faithfulness and kindness.”²

Read Psalm 145 as an example of a prayer of adoration.

“Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.” As we begin this Lenten season with this guide as a path marker, let us focus on the one to whom we are praying. That will be easy on Monday, as all of the prayers we examine will be prayers of adoration and declaration. But may our focus remain on he who is greatly to be praised as we pray prayers of confession, of petition, of thanksgiving, and of benediction.

Take a moment now, and take many moments today to pray the simple prayer, “Lord, you are...”

¹Hallesby, Ole, quoted in Prayer by Richard Foster. p. 84.

²Reeves, Michael, Enjoy Your Prayer Life. p. 30-31.

WEEK 1

TUESDAY – CONFESSION

Begin by reading Luke 18:9-14.

Every week at church, as a part of our liturgy, we have a time of confession. Hopefully, every day as a part of our relationship with God, we practice daily confession. But we don’t confess so that God will forgive us. This is a theological truth – if you are in Christ then your sins of the past, present, and future were forgiven by our gracious God when Jesus died on the cross 2,000 years ago. Forgiveness comes with salvation.

If this is true, then what is the point of confession?

Confession puts us in a proper place of humbly acknowledging our sinfulness while glorifying God who loves and forgives us in that place through Jesus Christ.

The Pharisee in this story is praying, but ironically has no need for God. Actually, he has no need to even be praying. He pretends to thank God, but he is really only “thanking” God for things that he did himself – avoiding sin, fasting, tithing, and being awesome. The Pharisee fits perfectly into the me-centric culture – being the best version of myself, killing it, hustling – look at the power of me! Notice how many first-person pronouns are used in his prayer – I...I...I...I...I... Five uses in one short prayer. Now contrast this prayer with the psalm we read yesterday. Then contrast it with the simple and humble prayer of the tax collector in today’s passage. “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

The tax collector’s confession rightly positions him before God. God is exalted as the one who gives mercy. The tax collector is humbled before a holy God. The tax collector is dependent on God for forgiveness, trusting that he will give it. Notice what Jesus says about the tax collector in telling this parable – he went down to his house “justified,” and because he humbles himself he will be exalted.

This may feel uncomfortable at first, but let’s use the prayer of the tax collector as our prayer today. When you find yourself faced with your own sin today, pray, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” When you find yourself confronted by the majesty of God pray, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” This confession, which rightly positions ourselves before God, must lead to exaltation. He gives mercy because of his great love! We are justified because of Jesus! Our righteousness comes not from ourselves (the misguided belief of the Pharisee), but is given to us by Jesus!

WEEK 1

WEDNESDAY – PETITION

Begin by reading Habakkuk 3:1-2.

As we examine the prayers found in Scripture, we see an abundance of prayers of adoration – we see example after example of sinful man confessing before a holy God. We also see prayers of petition – asking, beseeching, begging God to move, to work, to intercede, to bless, to guide, to not forget his promises. If what we have studied in our guide this week is correct – that our prayers must be God-centered – then how do we reconcile that with prayers of petition? How is this not a shift in centeredness to transition our prayers to asking God to give us things and to act on our behalf?

To properly understand this tension, we must properly understand God’s relation to us as Father.

Jesus taught us to pray to God as our Father. Later in scripture, he rhetorically asks of earthly fathers, “Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent...how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11). Our Father delights in our asking; he takes joy in giving good gifts to his children.

It is because of this that we must pray bold prayers. We ask God for big things – not so that we can get more, be more comfortable, or advance ourselves – but so that God would be glorified. Habakkuk, a prophet of God in the Old Testament, prays boldly.

Habakkuk and God’s people are in a stressful position in this passage as their enemies are pressing in. In his prayer, Habakkuk first remembers what God has done. Then he asks for God to do it again. Think of all the things the Lord has done that Habakkuk may be thinking about when he prays this prayer – the plagues, the Passover, the flood, manna, etc. “Do it again, Lord,” is his prayer.

There can be a negative reaction in our hearts when we hear someone pray with such audacity – “Who do you think you are that you can go to God Almighty with your own bold personal requests?” The answer is simple – I am a child of God, and Jesus taught us to pray to him as Father. And as a good Father, God gives his children good gifts, but that doesn’t mean he gives them everything they ask for; that is bad parenting, any way you look at it.

As you pray today, seek the Lord and consider something bold that you might begin talking to your Father about. Write it down. Share it with someone in your family or your Community Group. How does God being our Father affect the way that you pray that bold prayer?

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

WEEK 1

THURSDAY – THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading Philippians 1:3-5.

Paul wrote 13 books of the New Testament in the Bible, although it would be more correct to call them letters. In reading those letters, Paul could be described as an incredibly thankful person. In fact, 40 times in those letters he gives thanks for something. The thing he is most thankful for is people – twelve times, he mentions being thankful for people. However, there is something interesting about Paul’s abundant thanksgiving: of the 40 times Paul gives thanks, only one time does he thank people directly. In Romans 16, he gives thanks to Prisca and Aquila who “risked their necks for my life.” In every other instance, Paul does not thank people – he thanks

God for people. “We always thank God...when we pray for you” (Colossians 1:3), “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you” (Romans 1:8), and here in Philippians 1, “I thank my God in all remembrance of you.”

This ought to change our perspectives. We are quick to thank people, and so we should be. But so much of that thankfulness is rooted in our own insecurity, our need to be valued, or to be seen or noticed. We long to be thanked and appreciated, so we thank and appreciate others. When we thank people and neglect to thank God, we experience a lack of faith and a misappropriated giving of credit. As we have studied all week throughout this guide, even our thanksgiving needs to be God-centered. Paul doesn't just thank people, he thanks God for people, and he lets these people know that he thanks God for them. That is not just a slight semantic difference, that is a large shift in perspective.

Paul thanks God for the church in Philippi because of their enduring partnership in the gospel. Notice Paul's use of superlative – all... always... every... all... with joy. He is falling all over himself in gratitude to God when he prays.

Take a moment to pray with thanksgiving. If you are someone who journals, this is a good place to make a list. “Thank you, Lord, for...”

WEEK 1

FRIDAY – CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Begin by reading Acts 4:24-30.

A benediction is a short blessing or charge given at the end of a liturgy that is a sending out of God's people. We will end each week throughout this Lenten guide with a benediction, a charge, or a sending out.

Today's prayer is found in Acts 4. To gain context, read verses 1-31. This prayer was prayed in the midst of a hostile environment. Peter and John have been brought in before the "rulers and elders and scribes" for questioning because they have been preaching about Jesus, and even healed a man in Jesus' name. They are brought before the same council (possibly even in the same room) that sent Jesus to be crucified. The disciples speak boldly to the council in verse 13, but this powerful Jewish council tells the disciples to lose their boldness ("charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus"). Peter and John courageously, defiantly, and boldly say, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." The council threatens them again, then releases them. When Peter and John go back to the church, they share what happened, and then they pray, and then the earth shakes. Go back and read again their prayer in Acts 4:24-30.

The environment for the disciples becomes even more hostile. A few chapters later, followers of Jesus are killed for their faith, and the church flees Jerusalem. In their prayer, these followers ask for one thing - boldness to speak God's Word. There are many things they could have prayed for at this moment; they could have invoked the "hedge of protection" prayer which is often repeated in our lives. They know exactly what speaking God's Word is going to cost them, and they don't pray against that result. Instead, they pray for boldness, which will almost certainly increase the inevitability of that result.

Look at what comes from their boldness! They boldly shared everything they have in common (verse 4:32), they boldly cared for those who had needs (verse 4:34), they boldly confronted those living in sin (verses 5:1-10), and they boldly shared the good news of the resurrection of Jesus inside the church (verse 4:33) as well as outside the church (verse 5:14).

Oh, that we would be a church that speaks the Word of God with boldness. We live in a culture that is accepting of people with beliefs, as long as they are not too radical, and are kept private. The gospel of Jesus Christ is radical. If it's not radical,

then it's not the gospel. Our Lord commanded us that this good news is in no way to be kept private.

Consider today what it would look like for you to pray for boldness. Wrestle with God over this prayer, and write out these prayers. Maybe you need to revisit yesterday's prayer, because God is revealing to you that it is not bold enough.

Let us pray this prayer today:

Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, grant to me, your servant, and to Vintage Church to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

WEEK 2

MONDAY - ADORATION

Begin by reading Psalm 18:30-36.

God, your kingdom is what heals our broken world. You are making all things new.

It seems easier than ever to recognize brokenness in our world. Not too long ago, our nation was synonymous with prosperity and opportunity, collaboration and optimism. However, in recent years, a litany of issues including divisive social media patterns, increasing political tension, and mental health crises, seem to show cracks in that polished image America once portrayed. Beyond our own country and culture, natural disasters continue each year to devastate vulnerable areas and populations, disease continues to diversify and challenge even the most advanced medical experts, and it can easily seem like

good news is hard to find. Our feelings of comfort and security have become threatened, maybe even vulnerable.

Still, a spirit of problem-solving and hope survives in our world. There are still those around us who have the courage to speak up and encourage their fellow human into action. We tend to share a video of them on our social media channels, laud their efforts, and keep on scrolling to the next item. There are many things we tell ourselves about what will help heal the wounds of the broken world around us – we must elect the right leaders to further the policies we support, we ought to behave in a moral way, or we should give of our financial resources to help those in need. Surely, the darkness we see in the world is something that someone out there can fix. Right?

Too many times, our idea of hope is actually rooted in preserving a sense of control. If we, as a culture, can convince ourselves that something in our own efforts can respond to the brokenness we see, we feel okay. The truth is that this isn't really hope at all – it's just a bandage for our fear. The symptoms of the deep brokenness of the world cannot be healed by anything man can conjure up. The brokenness around us can only really be healed by God the Redeemer.

What Jesus teaches us in today's prayer is that our desire isn't meant to be centered on perfecting the earth by our own means. To be clear, it is abundantly clear throughout scripture that we are to have deep compassion for the earth and all those in it, but the prayer that Jesus models shows us that our heart's desire is to be for the kingdom of God to increase here, and that the world would look more like heaven. Only in the kingdom of God can we find true hope and true healing. What an incredible gift that God calls us to be a part of the advancement of his kingdom!

In the words of priest and theologian John Stott, "What Jesus bids us pray is that life on earth may come to approximate more nearly to life in heaven."

Only in God can we find our true strength and our true hope. His kingdom is unlike anything we can create or achieve on our own, but God still invites us to participate in it. Today, we adore the God who wants to make earth look more like heaven.

Take a moment of prayer to praise God that he is compassionate and loves the world.

In Psalm 18, David provides us with such a clear declaration that God is the only rock and the only one who equips us with strength. In your time of prayer today, use these two declarations and make them your own.

Consider how God has created you to be an ambassador of his kingdom in your life. What does this look like in your work? Within your family?

“Almighty God, my provider, you have equipped me with _____ to bring more of your kingdom into the world around me.”

Let's take time to be specific. David says God has “trained [his] hands for war.” Reflect on the past several months of your life. What areas of influence has the Lord positioned you in and prepared you for? If he has equipped you with certain qualities of influence, where is the Holy Spirit leading you to step into that influence? If something doesn't immediately seem clear, practice waiting and listening to the Lord.

WEEK 2

TUESDAY - CONFESSION

Begin by reading 1 Samuel 8.

God, there are times I choose the illusion of my own kingdom over the truth of your kingdom.

Our culture is famous for its kingdom-building. Around the world, generations have known of the American Dream, which, across its various interpretations, usually includes a married couple with children in a spacious home – golden retriever and SUV sold separately. If achieved, there is a promised prize of lasting security and certainty because of the accomplishment of such concrete and measurable things. In this dream, upward mobility at a solid, stable job is unlimited, so all 130.6 million full-time employees in the U.S. are on their way to the “top.” You simply have to work hard enough. You just have to put in the time. You’ll get what you’ve worked for, because you deserve it.

But this dream doesn’t readily show the fallout of all the workaholics who aren’t receiving what they’re earning, or their families that are suffering for it. It doesn’t show how those that place their hope in such an illusion are often left in isolation, depression, and despair. Media and cultural rhetoric often lead us to believe that working hard enough for long enough will guarantee us our own little kingdom, which we then get to sit back and enjoy. That rhetoric isn’t honest. The dream becomes just that – a dream.

There’s nothing wrong with working hard and working well. God calls us to do just that. There’s nothing wrong with working to provide for your family. There’s nothing wrong with having money. The downfall and the sin is found in the idolatry of our own kingdoms, when we are called to seek first the kingdom of God.

Israel was often guilty of this same mindset. In their liberation from Egypt, as they became a nation themselves, they asked God for a king simply so they could be more comparable to other successful nations. It was all about appearances, and they wanted to build their own kingdom, too.

Eventually, their kingdom falls apart. The Lord’s warning in scripture comes to fruition, and after many generations, we see the kingdom of Israel torn down and ruined. Even still, a time

comes when the Lord restores Israel. Nehemiah assembles the people of Judah, and they rebuild the walls with God's help, recommitting to a life of righteousness. The book of Nehemiah records a prayer of confession from the people in a powerful moment of repentance.

Read Nehemiah 9:22-31.

Reflect on this prayer.

This prayer catalogues the faithfulness of God which had been overlooked or forgotten by God's people. Are there ways that God has been faithful to you in your life that you've forgotten about? Take time to recall those things, and give thanks for them.

We are often similar to the people of Israel, forgetting God's faithfulness and instead pursuing our own ideas of progress. Are there specific things that have become more important to you than God's kingdom? Write them down or speak them aloud now.

God never turned away, even when the people had rejected him. This prayer in Nehemiah states, "In your great mercies, you did not end them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God." When we confess our sin, we acknowledge and receive the gift of God's eternal forgiveness found in Christ. Confession wasn't a place of wallowing for the people Nehemiah was leading – it was the starting point for a new season of rejoicing in mercy and following God again. Let it be the same for you today.

WEEK 2
WEDNESDAY – PETITION

Begin by reading John 17.

Lord, continually change my heart to desire your kingdom more and more. Be my way-maker and provider.

In John 17, Jesus models a beautiful prayer of petition on behalf of his disciples and the world. Two things stand out in this passage: Jesus prays for his disciples and all those that will believe in him to be united as one in a holy love, and he prays that such unity would show the world that the kingdom of God is real and true.

We live in a time and a culture where individualism has heavily distorted our concept of community and connectedness. It tells us that strength comes from the self, the goal of life is the advancement of self, and that our only true responsibility is ourselves. To go against this norm can feel culturally and even cognitively wrong. The longer we spend going with the flow of a dramatically individualistic culture, it can be profoundly difficult to change that pattern, and can bring feelings of tension and confusion, even frustration and isolation.

Yet, when we take that step against the norm together as a church family, it begins to show the world exactly what Jesus prayed for. Jesus prays “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us so that the world may believe you have sent me.” This isn’t the first time Jesus has mentioned such a concept in scripture, either. Before his betrayal, Jesus tells his disciples in John 13: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The King of Love is and has always been set on building a Kingdom of Love. To participate in this kingdom means to be consumed by this love and let it infiltrate every value we hold dear. What a gift it is for us to see that Jesus doesn't challenge his disciples to just "figure it out," but prays to the Father that he would be the one to show them what that love and unity looks like. Jesus asks boldly, because he has absolute faith that the Father will provide and move exactly as he needs to. We can have this same faith.

Individualism makes dependence seem difficult. It can even feel strange to ask God for things, as we may believe we're supposed to make those things happen on our own. Jesus shows us clearly that this is not the way. As we saw in week one of our guide, scripture tells us clearly that the Father delights in giving to his children. Therefore, we ask boldly, just as Jesus did.

Are there areas or patterns in your life that you feel like you're supposed to change on your own that you should really be asking the Father to change? Ask for that now, either in writing down your prayer or out loud.

Are there ways that you've avoided oneness with others that you need to invite the Father into?

WEEK 2

THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading Psalm 9:1-14.

Thank you for being the God who dwells with your people and never forsakes them.

For our prayer and thanksgiving exercise today, let's study what David prays in Psalm 9 and adapt it to our own prayers. First, he

begins with a declarative commitment to a life of praise. David continues to be very specific about how the Lord intervened in his struggle, then zooms out beyond his own experience and declares who God is to the oppressed and to those who trust in him. This is meant to be an encouragement to the whole of God's people. Then, David turns to the people in his community and beckons them to join him. Finally, he prays to God once more for more help. While it becomes clear his trouble is not over, in the middle of his circumstances, he stands firm in remembering what God has done for him already. This is his source of strength and hope.

This model of prayer and thanksgiving is a rich resource for us to dive deeper into our own rhythms of prayer. While there's nothing wrong with brief prayers that are straight to the point, diving into the psalms like this one can be a way for us to grow into an even more robust prayer life.

Jonathan David Helser is a songwriter and worship leader who also does a fair amount of teaching about worship and spiritual formation. In one of his talks, he shares a prayer and thanksgiving exercise called the "Dozen Roses" prayer. It's designed to be very simple, inviting us to quickly share one dozen "thank yous" to God, as a symbol of appreciation and recognition for his continued work and presence in our lives. Give the "Dozen Roses" prayer a try today. It may sound simple, and in seasons of rejoicing, your dozen items may come to mind very quickly. In other seasons, working toward that dozen can be more difficult than you might expect, but pushing yourself to give thanks for a dozen things in times of struggle can also lead to a deep peace and comfort.

WEEK 2

FRIDAY – CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Begin by reading Exodus 33:12-17.

God, I can walk in confidence and boldness, for your presence is always with me.

As we see in Exodus, Moses was faced with a daunting burden of leadership. He continually led a weary people through their escape from slavery and their wandering in the desert, helping to establish them as a nation and as God's people for the very first time. This was quite the transition for a man who had fled a nation after committing murder, and had taken up life as a shepherd. The nation of Israel faced existential threats at every turn, and in Exodus 33, God calls them to leave their current place at Mount Sinai and head for the Promised Land. It would surely be an exciting move, but also a daunting process. The exchange between God and Moses in this moment is profound, and will be the prayer that closes out our week. As we are called to participate and further the kingdom of God, may Moses' prayer and God's response to it be an encouragement to us, even in the most intimidating of moments that God may lead us through.

Moses' request involves confidence in the power of God, but is also filled with fear. He desires assurances that God is going to show up. "If your presence will not go with me, do not send us up from here." God immediately meets Moses in his fear, humility, and wisdom

As we journey to grow in desiring God's kingdom more than our own, we can face a lot of fear, especially if that journey means change or sacrificing comfort. Be reminded and walk confidently in the Father's answer, in this truth, no matter where he calls you: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

WEEK 3

MONDAY - ADORATION

Begin by reading Psalm 100.

This week in our sermon series we're looking at Matthew 6:11-12:

“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

At first glance, this might seem like a prayer checklist - a little bread, some forgiveness, just a few unrelated things you'd like to ask God for. We are pretty comfortable with those kinds of prayers, where we read off our punch list to God in no particular order. But what we'll see this week is that this verse about bread and debts, what we can call provision and forgiveness, are most certainly related, and that relation is pretty profound in shaping how we relate to God.

Before we get to this, let's take a moment to remember back to the first week of our guide, and recall the heavenly Father to whom we're praying.

Take time to reread Psalm 100.

This psalm is telling us to do some things. If you were to write it out, this starts to look like a long list: make a joyful noise to the Lord, serve the Lord, sing to him, know who he is, enter his gates, give thanks, bless his name. However, these are all iterations of one thing the psalmist is encouraging you to do this morning: come into God's presence with praise. Look at how the psalm helps us out by showing God to be praiseworthy in verses 3 and 5. We're told to remember that the Lord is God, that he's the Most High, that he's our creator, and that we belong to him. We are his people, but not so that we can serve at his will or scrape and grovel before him. We're the sheep of

his pasture - he cares for us. God is good, and he loves us with a never ending, never changing love. How you feel about him right now doesn't change how he feels about you right now. This psalm helps us out another way: it doesn't say anything about bringing your checklist to God. Have you ever noticed this phenomenon, that when petitioning requests dominate your prayers, you can still feel distant from God? Think about it - if you had a friend or child or spouse who only ever talked to you about what they needed from you, wouldn't that stunt your relationship? Don't you think they would miss out on actually being with you? To clarify, we already mentioned that Jesus tells us to ask God for our daily bread, so these requests are absolutely meant to be a part of our prayers. But only a part.

Would you set aside your day and all its demands for a moment and come into God's presence with praise? There isn't an ounce of guilt in this psalm about how long it's been since you last came into his presence, it simply tells you to do so.

Take some time to meditate on Psalm 100:5:

*“For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Consider writing this verse down, and memorizing it so you can remember God's goodness in prayer throughout the day. He's good to you before you ever ask for a thing.

WEEK 3 TUESDAY - CONFESSION

Begin by reading Psalm 130.

*“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

To truly pray this part of the Lord's prayer, we have to be willing to admit two things. The first is that we have daily needs that we can't absolutely guarantee we will receive. We'll discuss that concept further in tomorrow's guide. The second thing we must admit is that we have things to be forgiven for – that might make us a little squeamish.

We typically don't like addressing the topic of sin. We tend to think it either paints God in a bad light or paints us in a bad light, so we simply avoid it. Also, there isn't any sort of uniform language in the world around us for talking about sin. In fact, the more uniform language obscures obedience to God, encouraging instead an obedience to self. "Obey God" has little place in a society that encourages "you do you." In order to talk about forgiveness with God, we have to first admit that God gets to say what is and isn't in need of forgiveness. We must address our own attempts to set that standard, and to gloss over God's authority in favor of our own. In doing so, we might just realize how greatly in need we are of forgiveness.

Take time to reread Psalm 130.

This psalm doesn't have any of the muddled "it's my life, I can do what I want" arguments that we tend to make for ourselves. It takes a clear-eyed look at sin, and is willing to admit a need for forgiveness. "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"

Maybe, instead of ignoring sin, you tend to fixate on it. Some of us regularly feel crushed by the weight of our need for forgiveness. You might know all too well that you have no business being forgiven by a holy, righteous, perfect God, and that "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Though we might go to God in prayer over sin, we have a hard time believing that he's really forgiven us. If that's you, or perhaps when that's you, take time to meditate on the next verse, "But with you there is forgiveness."

For either person, the one who would ignore sin or the one fixated on it, the psalm is the same: wait on the Lord. This implies trust, the underlying factor in both going to God for forgiveness and leaving knowing that you are forgiven. Trust is the unifying element between receiving your daily bread and being forgiven by God, as well as having the courage to forgive others. Wait on what God would say about your sin and his forgiveness, and trust what he says.

Take some time to pray today. Confess your sin to God, but also confess to yourself that God can forgive your sin. Confess that you are incapable of saving yourself from your sin, but also confess that God is both willing and capable to save you. Consider this prayer that you can keep in your head throughout the day, that you can repeat in the car or say under your breath over and over until it echoes in your soul: “My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.”

WEEK 3

WEDNESDAY – PETITION

Begin by reading Exodus 16.

For the past two and a half weeks, we’ve talked about prayer, both in scripture and in practice, so you might notice a conspicuous absence in this passage. There isn’t a single shred of a prayer anywhere to be found!

For context, the Israelites had recently been liberated from slavery in Egypt, and were walking through the desert to a new country God was giving them. Here in Exodus 16, the Israelites are about six weeks into that journey and start complaining about their lack of food. When you read this passage, you might be imagining these poor former slaves wandering the desert without a scrap of food. But take a look at Exodus 12:38 – Israel left Egypt with “very much livestock.” Then look at Exodus 17:3

– they still have that livestock with them! So the Israelites aren't starving, but they're likely starting to experience needs out in the desert.

Instead of asking God to supply their needs, considering he just saved them from Egypt, the Israelites complain. Worse still, they complain about being hungry even though they still have food on hand. Surely, there isn't a better example of our own tendencies than looking past what we DO have to complain about what we DON'T have. Though Israel was finally free from slavery, they longed for the luxuries of their former chains. That, if we're honest, is a high-definition photo of our own hearts.

But look at what God did in response: he answered the prayers they didn't pray. They didn't think to ask him to provide, but he still provided in miraculous, unexpected ways. Note all of the peculiarities about the manna that God provided: it wasn't normal loaf bread, it settled like frost, it had to be collected before the sun got too hot, and it wouldn't keep for more than a day. This kind of provision is God's specialty - throughout scripture he constantly provides through unexpected means. Asking God for your "daily bread" means abandoning your expectations on how exactly (and when exactly and what exactly) he will provide for you. Let's notice two more important things about the manna: the bread only lasted one day (except on the Sabbath), because more than filling Israel's bellies God wanted to create in his people the muscle memory of trusting over and over and over that he will provide. In training this muscle memory, God expected their participation. The Israelites had to physically go out every morning, stoop down to the ground, and scoop up the manna.

These two things, practicing trust and participation, show us that God's provision is meant to produce something unique in us. It's a different thing than what we ask for; we just want a meal, but God wants to mold and shape our very souls. At the root of our ungrateful attitudes and prayerless moods is

probably, among other things, our affinity for earthly provision over God's provision. Completely trusting God for what you need, both material and immaterial, requires exercise, just like picking up manna day in and day out, in order to build the muscle memory of trust.

Consider how you can build that muscle memory today. Write out the things you're waiting on or in need of right now, the things you've prayed for, and the things you've yet to pray for. Look over the list and pray that you would trust God to provide, even if it's different than what you expect, and that his provision would point you not to the thing he's providing but to him, our Provider. Share with your community group or friends this week how you think God is calling you to grow in your trust of him.

WEEK 3

THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading Isaiah 12.

Earlier this week, we were reminded of God's forgiveness towards us, even when we have a hard time believing it, and his provision for us, even when we have a hard time asking for it. Beneath the difficulties we experience with God's forgiveness and provision is our trust in his word, that we need forgiveness, that his forgiveness is sufficient, that he will provide for us, and that his provision will be sufficient. As we think back to Exodus 16 from yesterday's guide, we share one of many things in common with the people in the Bible: trusting God can be pretty hard for us.

How utterly astounding, then, that God would choose to save us, knowing that we have a hard time trusting him, and that we often follow him in fits and starts. One minute we're boldly stepping out like Peter did onto the water in Matthew 14, and

the very next, we're sinking into doubts that God can keep us safe from the waves. How amazing that, despite our fickle hearts and frequent rebellion, God would provide salvation for us and restore us to himself for eternity.

Take time to reread Isaiah 12, and see how we can respond to God's forgiveness.

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

This is such a beautiful picture of the continual refreshment salvation can bring. Following Jesus in the day-to-day, through the ups and downs and mundane moments of life, can be trying, discouraging, and lonely.

How has salvation been refreshing to you already? How has God restored your soul with the good news that his anger has turned away? How has he comforted you?

Note how this praiseworthy attitude over God's work in your life is meant to lead you to respond: make known his deed among the peoples, and proclaim that his name is exalted.

WEEK 3

FRIDAY - CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Begin by reading Psalm 32.

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

In Psalm 32, David remembers a time when he was silent about his sin. Silent, but certainly not unaware. In fact, David's sin was eating away at him, strangling him from the inside out. We get the sense in this psalm that he was simultaneously

withering in silence, and bursting to say something about it. This should help us put to death the idea that hiding our sin is better than dealing with it. We can hide our sin from others, for a time. We can maybe even hide it from ourselves. But let's remember back to Psalm 130: "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Nothing is hidden from God, and everything that is hidden will eventually be revealed. (Luke 8:17)

As we move through this psalm, we finally see David speak. He goes to God in confession and comes away knowing that he is forgiven. Perhaps for David, God goes from seeming like a far off accuser, a peeved boss, or a disappointed father, and becomes a place of security. This is a turning point in verse 7; David goes from hiding FROM God, to hiding IN God. This should illuminate the lie that confession is worse than living with our sin. That's a grave underestimation of the effects of sin.

Notice how the pronouns shift in today's psalm. David starts out speaking to God, saying, "You forgave the iniquity of my sin." But then in verse 8, he changes direction saying, "I will instruct you." That's a clear insight that he's not speaking to God any more; now, he's talking to us, and he's saying, "Don't be like me! Don't waste away while you're waiting to go to God – go right now!" Don't keep silent in your sin. Steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts the Lord, who trusts him enough to bring him whatever you need to bring him: your doubts, your hopes, even your disdain for his ways. This week, we've looked at how we can trust God with our provision and our forgiveness, and keep building up the muscle memory of trusting him daily. Having been forgiven in Christ, we have every reason to say, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." As this week comes to a close, hear David's instruction: Be not slow to come to the Lord.

WEEK 4:
MONDAY – ADORATION

Begin by reading Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Happiness is shallow. It is fickle. Happiness can come with the weather, and leave with your team's inability to kick a field goal. It comes with good BBQ, and departs with a break-up. Joy is much deeper, more substantial, unshakable. We adore God and praise him, not out of happiness but out of joy. Our world is enslaved to a desperate pursuit of happiness. The predominant worldview in which we find ourselves, is the pursuit of the greatest amount of happiness for the largest number of people. In this worldview, we find inevitable emptiness, because happiness is fickle. In this worldview, there is no room for suffering. In his book on suffering, Tim Keller says, "In the secular view, this material world is all there is. And so the meaning of life is to have the freedom to choose the life that makes you most happy. However, in that view of things, suffering can have no meaningful part."¹

Can you still adore God in the absence of happiness? We have a beautiful church with fantastic music throughout all four of our locations, and can feel easy to worship God in those settings, but can our adoration extend outside of those comfortable walls to times of suffering? Songs have been added to our church music repertoire with titles like "Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord" and "Your Grace Is Enough," quoting passages of scripture written by Job and Paul. These songs completely miss the authors' intent when we sing them with happy guitars and pop beats. Job wrote the words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," after his children died – ALL of them (Job 1:21). Paul wrote about the sufficiency of God's grace while talking about pain in his life that would not go away (2 Corinthians 12:9). These words were written in anguish, with wailing, but yet are still words of adoration.

Read Habakkuk 3:1-19.

We read part of Habakkuk's prayer in week one of our guide. The end of Habakkuk's prayer is a God-centered prayer of adoration. Even if the crops don't produce, the flocks disappear, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." (verse 3:18). Habakkuk, like Job and Paul, does not praise God for what he will do for him, but for who God is. Let us pray the prayer of Habakkuk today. Your life currently, no doubt, involves pain and struggle. Pour those things out before the Lord, and with each item, conclude with, "...yet will I rejoice in you, Lord, I will take joy in the God of my salvation."

¹Keller, Timothy, *Walking With God Through Pain And Suffering*, p. 16

WEEK 4 TUESDAY - CONFESSION

Begin by reading 1 Kings 19:4.

Elijah is one of the most remarkable prophets in all of scripture – we will talk more about him in depth in tomorrow's guide. In 1 Kings 18, we see one of the boldest displays of faith in all the Bible. Elijah trusts God to provide – specifically, in this instance, it is fire to ignite the water-logged sacrifice on Mount Carmel in front of 850 pagan prophets. God provides, and the sacrifice is set ablaze.

This was a difficult time for prophets in Israel at this time in history. Due to the anger of the Queen Jezebel, whatever prophets were left alive were in hiding - except Elijah. After Elijah's experience of God's miraculous fire raining episode, Queen Jezebel wants him dead.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-4.

Elijah's prayer of confession in verse 4 seems shocking. He confesses that his sin is the same as that of his fathers, and so it is. After fearlessly confronting the king, a widow's dead son, and a whole army of prophets of Baal, and trusting in God's miraculous provision in each instance, Elijah is now running in fear from the Queen's threat. This is a pattern that is similar to his fathers - lacking in faith, despite having seen God provide time and again. Then Elijah prays that God would take his life! The Lord knows our hearts; why then would we pray anything other than honest prayers? Elijah's prayer is an honest prayer. God loves honest prayers. Prayers of confession are where we can truly examine ourselves: What are the emotions we are feeling? Where does our anxiety lie? What is making us angry? Where are these emotions finding their source? Perhaps these emotions are coming from a root of sin that needs to be confessed and confronted. Often, we conclude that relational strife is the root, and that, too, needs to be both confessed to God and dealt with relationally. Maybe you can relate with Elijah in this passage, and find that your emotions are stemming from a lack of faith. Confession is a time where we confess our sin before a holy God who accepts us, but, more than that, lavishes us with his love. Confession is also a time where we lay our hearts and emotions bare before God, and deal with those things in our lives that need to be dealt with.

Lest we think God is offended by our honest prayers that lack faith, look at the rest of the story in 1 Kings. God feeds Elijah, encourages him, and reveals himself to Elijah.

Take a moment and sort through your emotions with the Lord. Be honest about what those emotions are. Wrestle with God about where these emotions come from. Maybe they are healthy expressions of life. Perhaps they are the result of sin in your life, or someone else's. Confess what needs to be confessed. Embrace what needs to be embraced. Acknowledge the things over which you have no control, and surrender them to the Lord.

WEEK 4 WEDNESDAY – PETITION

Begin by reading 1 Kings 17:8-24.

It is probably a regularly recited prayer in your life to pray for protection in one form or another. And surely, because we believe in a God who heals, prayers of healing have been a regular part of your prayer life as well. Chances are, because of what we read in scripture, you have even prayed for God to miraculously intervene in a situation. But who of us has prayed for God to bring someone back to life?

Elijah does that very thing in 1 Kings 17. The Lord tells Elijah that there is a widow in Zarephath that will feed him. She is out of food, but Elijah, in faith, tells her that her food will not run out. He makes a bold declaration, but in this case, Elijah has something to base it on. The Lord told him the widow would feed him, so he was trusting that the Lord would follow through on his promise. Then, the widow's son dies. There is no indication from the passage that God gave Elijah any sort of promise regarding the son's life. Elijah prays for resurrection, and the passage says, "The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah" (verse 22). This is one of the boldest prayers in Scripture, and the Lord intervened.

What are we to do with this prayer? Do we look at it as a fluke? A one-time thing? Do we view it as "not applicable to us" because Elijah was an Old Testament prophet? Or should we now start praying for God to resurrect the dead?

First, we have to know that we love and serve the same God who raised this widow's son from the dead. We trust God, and pray with boldness because he can raise the dead, and because even if he does not, that in no way changes who God is. Second, we must know that God, in whose name we pray, is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Though 1 Kings 17 gives us no indication that God gave Elijah a promise about the

resurrection of the widow's son, God has given us the promise of resurrection. As followers of Jesus, we have been baptized with him in his death, and raised with him in resurrection, in the newness of life (Romans 6:3-4). Jesus conquered death, thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)!

Knowing this, how does this shape how we petition God in prayer? We pray in faith, knowing that God is able. We pray in surrender, knowing that God is good. We pray with joy, knowing that we are victorious through Jesus. We pray without ceasing in everything, because God is sovereign.

WEEK 4

THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading Psalm 30.

Today's psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving. This is a psalm of salvation. David's story was littered with enemies - actual, physical enemies. There were multitudes of people in David's life who wanted to kill him - foreign armies, Goliath, his own King (Father-in-law, in fact), and even own son. This is why the psalms of David talk so much about enemies pursuing him, because, for most of David's life, there were literal enemies pursuing him. In those psalms, David thanks God for his salvation, for being saved from his enemies: "He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me." (Psalm 18:17). Psalm 30 shows us David thanking God for his salvation. This salvation is not in a militaristic sense; this is the rescued-from-the-pit type of salvation. This salvation is the turning-mourning-into-dancing type; the type which makes one proclaim, "I will give thanks to you forever," and which provides a way for that to happen.

If your life has been rescued from the pit because of the grace of Jesus and his Spirit testifies with your spirit that you are God's child, then this must be the singular item on your prayer of thanksgiving list which is most often repeated. That God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him," and that "in love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved," in whom we "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight" (Ephesians 1:4-9) - for this we must give thanks every time we pray. By this glorious salvation, which is ours through Jesus, God transfers to us his own righteousness. This is how we have the ability to confidently come before his throne in prayer as clean vessels. This salvation must stir prayers of thanksgiving.

Today, every time you pray, thank God for his salvation which he has given to you through faith. If you need help putting words to it, read Ephesians 1, Romans 3, or 1 Corinthians 15.

WEEK 4

FRIDAY - CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Begin by reading Revelation 22:6-21.

Innumerable books have been written on prayer. Sermons, seminars, classes, retreats, and indeed, even this very Lenten guide you hold in your hands, have been created for thousands of years to instruct God's people in how to pray more, how to pray better, how to pray more like Jesus, etc. In this guide, we are looking at 30 different prayers that we see in Scripture. The last prayer that we see in the Bible, in the penultimate verse, in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible is also the shortest prayer in the Bible. John, at the conclusion of his apocalyptic

letter to the seven churches in Asia, vividly and dramatically tells us about the simple truth that Jesus is coming back to reign and rule forever, and prays “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

John Calvin, in his Institutes, calls prayer “a perpetual exercise of faith.”¹ The prayers of adoration, confession, petition, thanksgiving, and benediction that we are examining in this guide are simply ways in which we can exercise our faith. Bold prayers, honest prayers, prayers of lament – these are ways that we are putting feet to our faith. The simple prayer of a child before bed is a means of practicing the faith that is already in their innocent heart. Perhaps Calvin has found the simplest description of what prayer is: “the exercising of one’s faith.”

The apostle John has spent 22 chapters in Revelation painting describing the vision Jesus gave him of heaven, hell, death, and eternal life. It is a picture which concludes with Jesus dwelling with his people: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (verse 21:3). Then Jesus declares, “I am making all things new” (verse 21:5). As a benediction, a conclusion, and a commentary on all that he has seen and so written, John can only say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” If you, too, were exiled on an island and saw a vision of Jesus in heaven, that would probably be all you could say as well.

If this is not our daily prayer then, simply put, we are too in love with this world. As you go throughout today and this weekend, consciously pray this final prayer of John, even out loud, in response to everything that happens. It sounds natural to pray for Jesus to return when we are devastated, but what about when you receive good news? When you are with friends? When you are eating good food? Prayer is the perpetual exercise of faith, and our faith lies in the promise of the return of Jesus, when we will dwell in perfect sinless communion with him for eternity. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

¹ Calvin, John. Institutes. Book Third, Chapter 20.

WEEK 5
MONDAY – ADORATION

Begin by reading Matthew 20:20-28.

You are the God who dwells with us, the God who died for us, and the God who rose again and covered us in your victory.

You are the Savior that teaches us how to love and serve.

Our worship always has to begin with putting God in his proper place – above all else. When we’re abiding by our culture’s norms, we are enthroned in the kingdom of our lives, yet Mary Magdalene’s conversation with Jesus reminds us that this has been a temptation of human nature across the span of history and time. Mary Magdalene’s request on behalf of her sons illustrates that we’re prone to believe that serving well earns us a certain honor, or entitles us to a higher position in the kingdom of God. Jesus reminds us quickly in this passage that this is not the way of God’s kingdom, because even the Son of God came to serve and give his life. Love is not for earning. It is absolute in its selfless giving.

Prayer helps us to constantly reorient our lives and mentalities around the true economy of heaven, when the economy of earth is constantly pulling us towards systems of hierarchy power acquisition. Our first step in this new orientation is reminding our hearts that Jesus truly is King, and his way of love is how we seek to live and serve the world around us.

This week, as we respond to the profound love and depth with which Jesus was a servant, the prayer found in Revelation 5 will be helpful to us.

Reflect on this prayer and repeat it once more.

WEEK 5
TUESDAY - CONFESSION

Begin by reading 2 Samuel 11-12.

God, I confess that there are times where I seek recognition, glory, position, or authority more than I seek to serve others out of real love.

King David had a responsibility to love and serve his nation with honor and integrity. Passionate worshiper that he was, there were times that David abused his power and severely mistreated his people to get what he wanted. One of the most famous examples of this abuse of power is found in the story of David and Bathsheba.

King David, in the season when kings are supposed to be going out to war, instead sends his subject in his place. While staying safe at home, David sees Bathsheba bathing on the roof of her home, brings her into his dwelling, and commits adultery with her; Bathsheba becomes pregnant. Bathsheba was the wife of one of David's military commanders, whose integrity and sense of honor made it impossible for David to cover up his wrongdoing, so David instead sends Bathsheba's husband, the commander, into battle, commands his soldiers to abandon him, and allows him to be killed.

Rather than come clean for his mistakes, David uses his position of power to cover them up and hide. There is no love in his actions, only self-preservation and self-satisfaction. However, David is exposed before the Lord when the prophet Nathan is sent by God to rebuke him. Finally, David repents and turns back to God, a prayer of confession that we see recorded as Psalm 51.

In a culture that promotes self-advancement and self-preservation above love and service of others, we are easily

encouraged to forsake the world around us, even feeling entitled to do so because of our position or past good works. This is a broken economy that leads to more brokenness.

The Lord's response to David, even though it includes consequences, is filled with mercy and holds redemption. Nathan tells David, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die."

Read Psalm 51.

Our prayer today is this psalm in its entirety. Spend a few minutes asking the Holy Spirit to show you any places of pride or entitlement in your life. In the fullness of grace and mercy, confess those things aloud and let God heal them. Take time to reread Psalm 51 aloud, and feel free to continue in prayer afterward.

WEEK 5 WEDNESDAY - PETITION

Begin by reading Luke 22.

God, make my heart like yours - wholly submitted to serve and to give my life for others. Please place me in situations and provide opportunities to serve others in a pure way like Jesus.

One of the most profound prayers in all of scripture is found in Luke 22. In this passage, we read that Jesus withdraws to pray on the very night of his betrayal, and prays for the task that lay before him - torture and death on a cross - to be taken away.

Wait, hold on. Didn't Jesus come to earth to die for our sins? Didn't he know what he signed up for?!

While Jesus came to live perfectly and die for us, he was still

fully human, and still had to bear the brutal physical burden of crucifixion, as well as the task of spending three days in hell and overcoming the power of sin and death. His knowledge of the coming pain would do nothing to make it easier to bear. It is humbling and challenging for us to know that amidst this pain, Jesus would submit to the will of the Father, but it ought to also be an encouragement to us that the very Son of God approached the Father to make a request of him in his time of need. Even though Jesus was not released from the task at hand, the example that we're given in scripture is that Christ was still bold as he asked things of the Father, in the absolute darkest of moments. In that moment of prayer, an angel comes and strengthens Jesus.

As Jesus neared crucifixion, the picture we see of true service included Jesus not only setting aside his "rights" as God, but altogether forsaking them, as if they weren't a factor at all. He subjugated his God-ness to the way of love and service, not the other way around, and trusted God to provide the strength he needed to serve in the way that he was meant to. This is what we must emulate.

As we follow in the footsteps of Christ, our requests today will echo the prayer of St. Francis, a follower of Jesus who founded an order of monastic living in the 13th century, committed to poverty and serving the poor.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

*O Divine Master,
 Grant that I may not so much seek
 To be consoled as to console;
 To be understood, as to understand;
 To be loved, as to love;
 For it is in giving that we receive,
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.*

Amen.

WEEK 5 THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading Psalm 92.

Jesus, thank you for being a savior who made love and servanthood so clear for your disciples. May I be one who seeks to serve like you.

Today, utilize Psalm 92 as a prayer of thanksgiving for who God is, what he has done, and the way he prospers the spirits of those who are truly rooted in him. Pray through the psalm in its entirety.

Jesus tells his disciples, as recorded in the Gospel of John,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

Finally, today, we give thanks to God that he gives us his Holy Spirit to guide us in all love and truth. This is how we are able to serve like Jesus. Find two or three specific applications for this, and ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways you can serve, or bring to mind people you can show love to.

Thank you, Father, for empowering me by the Holy Spirit to love and serve _____. Holy Spirit, guide me.

WEEK 5 FRIDAY - CHARGE & BLESSING

Begin by reading Luke 2:27-33, the prayer of Simeon.

The strength of Christ in humble service is alive in me through his death and resurrection.

It can be a daunting thought, that we are called to lay down our lives to love and serve the world around us, emulating the “light for revelation.” Jesus was perfect - he was fully God - how could we match that kind of love? But that’s why God gave us the Holy Spirit. Thankfully, we’re not left to figure it out - we’ve been given the answer!

As we prayed in yesterday’s guide, we can close out this week thanking God that he gives us his Spirit to empower us to love and serve like Jesus did. How beautiful that we are a part of God’s plan for his kingdom to infiltrate the world. This is the whole point of the Great Commission - to go and make disciples of all nations.

Consider this from Paul’s letter to the Philippians:

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

And the following, from Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Paul’s encouragement to the early church is an encouragement to us as well. You are equipped, through the Holy Spirit, with the mind of Christ, and have everything you need to serve well, love deeply, and advance the kingdom of God to the world around you.

WEEK 6

MONDAY – ADORATION

Begin by reading Psalm 20.

Holy Week is the church tradition in which we reflect on the final days of Jesus' life. This week begins with recognizing the king. While many gathered for Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday, none truly recognized the king. The people dreamed of and demanded an earthly king who would use power to bend all towards his will, restoring good to his people while crushing all those who oppose him. While Jesus was all-powerful, he instead chose to lay his power down in service to love. He was and is our Servant King.

We have spent each Monday of this Lenten guide gazing upon the Lord in adoration and declaring him as our king. On this day of Holy Week, let's not fall into the same error as those shouting his name on the original Palm Sunday, where we paint Jesus in our image of the ideal king. Our king is Love and "...emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

We declare his praise and pronounce our allegiance to this humble Servant King. Having Jesus Christ at the center of our adoration is one way we pray, which rightly centers our heart and mind on him. As we've seen throughout this guide, the psalms are the prayers and songs of God's people, and give us a beautiful image of how we can put voice to God's attributes and actions. Using Psalm 20 as your prayer, consider the Servant King who is Jesus and what this means for how he might answer this prayer.

WEEK 6

TUESDAY - CONFESSION

Begin by reading Isaiah 49:1-7.

Jesus was sent not only to restore Israel, but to extend God's loving salvation to every tribe and every nation. That means every language, every shade of skin color, every physical characteristic, every religious leaning, every tradition. God's words in Isaiah 49 indicate that the work begun by Jesus - that we are tasked to continue - excludes no person, period.

As we are in Holy Week and approaching Easter, ask yourself: who this is for? Is Easter Sunday a victory lap for Christians as we celebrate Jesus overcoming sin and death? Certainly, we ought to rejoice in the hope we now have, but if we see ourselves as the sole or even primary recipients of salvation, it's "too light a thing," as verse 6 reads. This message of hope is for all the world, and in light of all differences, needs, and sin around us, we're charged to love each person as Christ has loved us.

We see this love exhibited by Jesus on the cross, but that extension of his love is also in the actions of the New Testament church. Read Acts 7:54-60, and note Stephen's views of those who are in the process of murdering him. If this is his posture and perspective, who are we to begrudge those with whom we disagree? Spend time confessing to God those who you've held a grudge against, hated, or withheld grace from. Ask for our gracious king to reveal where you are keeping the light of salvation from those around you, and for the courage and faith to walk in a new manner of love towards all people.

WEEK 6
WEDNESDAY - PETITION

Begin by reading Psalm 141.

Jesus came, not only to save us from sin and death, but to usher in a new kingdom. He speaks of this kingdom of heaven at length in the book of Matthew, and our gift is to not only walking around with the status of “saved,” but to take part in the exciting, eternal work of building God’s kingdom in the here and now. Our 2020 theme at Vintage Church is “Experience The Kingdom” and we long to see hope, peace, and joy abound as we live in and build God’s kingdom instead of our own little kingdoms.

Perhaps the most wonderful part about God’s kingdom is that it is a kingdom of abundance. Jesus was without want or need that could not be fulfilled by God the Father. He was freed from building status, prestige, or fame. His identity was not in material goods, comfort, or safety. Jesus rested completely in the love of God the Father, freeing him to build the Kingdom of Love as he looked to the Father for all of his needs.

Go boldly to the God who delights in you, asking for his provision. While we wonder what is appropriate to ask for, at the heart of each request should be this most important thing: to know and love God. God has promised to give us himself, and this is what our heart and soul need most. Will you pray to God to receive more of God? More of his presence, his peace, his loving assurance? We need it, and God graciously gives himself freely.

In light of this, pray Psalm 141 today. In this psalm, we see David praying to stay close to God - to have the faith and perspective to build God’s kingdom. It’s a prayer of humility, and as we are humbled and quieted, God has room to shape us and teach us.

WEEK 6

THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING

Begin by reading John 17.

The love of God is most clearly displayed on the cross, but it's not only that moment of loving restraint from calling the whole thing off - Jesus willingly walked into betrayal, arrest, abuse, crucifixion, and death itself. On this Maundy Thursday, we commemorate the last words and actions of Jesus on the night of his arrest. In these last hours, Jesus gave gifts. Consider that as his heart was struggling with the weight of what was about to happen, he had you in mind. Remember that it was this night that Jesus instituted communion, or The Lord's Supper. He washed the feet of his disciples, making it crystal clear exactly what type of kingdom he was sending us out to build. He also gave us the prayer we find in John 17.

Read John 17, and take time to consider the gift Jesus gave to us all with this prayer. Spend time thanking God for what he gave us through this prayer. It's easy to consider what we're lacking, but looking at what Jesus prayed in John 17, how has this changed you? Where would you be without the things Jesus prayed for and gave us in this prayer?

WEEK 6

FRIDAY - CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Begin by reading Matthew 6:9-13.

Good Friday is the day in the church calendar that we focus solely on the cross. Knowing, in hindsight, the victorious resurrection that was to come changes the way we view this shocking event. On the actual day in history, the followers of Jesus were awestruck, shell-shocked, and in a state of

perpetual fear and grief. All they had believed and built their lives upon came crumbling down, or so it seemed. For every follower of Jesus since that day, it's quite the opposite. All that we believe and build our lives upon is solidified by the cross of Jesus and his resurrection; the cross changes everything, including not only our destination after we die, but our purpose in the here and now.

It was love that sent Jesus to the cross, and nothing is a more powerful sending agent. Were we to be sent by fear or duty, we're only pressing forward until we've satiated either one. Love cannot be satiated, but it is a flame that is fanned as we spread it. The same love that sent Jesus to the cross is still moving in and through us today, and should be our charge to take this love to more people, further and deeper than ever before.

Our final prayer of Lent is the Lord's Prayer. How will you pray this prayer differently from when we began Lent six weeks ago? How has your view of God changed, and how have you experienced his love and presence through the practice of Lent?

Pray then like this:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

