

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MARCH 1 - 5, 2021

LENTEN SERIES 2021  
FEB 21 - APR 4

# New Rhythms



# Morning Prayer

20-30 minutes

**Be still.** Find a quiet place. Get seated comfortably. Relax. Take a few deep breaths. Remind yourself: “I am here to meet God. No other appointment competes in importance.” Commit your day to God.

**Sit with a Psalm.** You might read Psalm 95 or Psalm 100, but any psalm will do.

**Sit with a Scripture.** If you have a Bible reading program, maybe also read another part of the Bible, perhaps a section from the Old Testament or from one of the Gospels. You might choose to begin to read through Scripture using the lectionary reading for the day. (This year many are using the “B” year readings found at <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=B>)

**Sit with God.** Still your heart in God’s presence, allowing yourself to become fully aware of the fact that God is already there, gently inviting you to constantly be with Him throughout your day.

- **Adoration.** Think on the greatness of God. How incredible it is that God knows you and desires to have fellowship with you. God is eager to encounter you! Adore Him.
- **Thanksgiving.** Name the things that God has given you for which you are grateful: family, friends, health, work, a place to live, food, fun, the church and other gifts ... and be thankful for Christ’s death on the cross, salvation, life in Him now, and the promise of eternal life. Picture these gracious gifts and thank God for each one.

**Dedication.** Review the significant vows you have taken ... those you’ve taken as a Christian, as a church member, as an employee, as a spouse, parent, and even as a son or a daughter. Reaffirm these vows, but also focus intently on this day. Offer your life to God for joyful service today!

**Guidance.** Envision your day with God. Foresee God in each task, in each relationship, in each opportunity, in each member of your family and in every unscheduled event or encounter that will happen today. Ask for God’s guidance in each aspect of your day.

**Intercession.** Make a list of people who are in need of your prayers. Contemplate each one and lift up their individual needs to God. Love them.

**Petition.** Now, after you have done these things, lift up your own needs to God. Tell Him what you most deeply desire in your own life. As you spend time in God's presence, your desires will change and mature; your true wants get crystallized by the Spirit.

**Act of Trust.** Intentionally release your prayers to God and trust God to answer them.

**Wait.** In the ensuing silence, wait to hear what God wishes to say to you. Silently contemplate the phrase: "Speak, Lord ... your child listens."

## Mid-day Prayer 5-10 minutes

**Set aside the time.** Find a midday time that works with your schedule, perhaps after lunch or later in the afternoon. Set your phone or your clock to remind you so you don't forget.

**Be still.** Quiet your heart, read a portion of Scripture, allow yourself to once again become aware of God's presence that's already there. You might spend some time using the "breath prayer." As you breathe in, pray: "Come, Lord Jesus." As you breathe out, pray: "I belong to you." Resist the temptation to make this a time of intercession where you tell God what you want Him to do. Just be with Him.

**Petition.** Close by inviting God into the ordinary tasks you still have to do that day. Ask God to work in the problems that have already come up.

# Evening Prayer

10-15 minutes

**Be still.** Find a quiet place. Get seated comfortably. Relax. Take a few deep breaths. Remind yourself: “I am here to meet God. No other appointment competes in importance.” Enjoy His presence with you for a few minutes.

- Pray another Psalm.
- Read another passage of Scripture.

**Time to reflect and review.** Invite God to help you reflect on the day. Identify the places that God has been at work in your life today and give thanks to Him for His consistent presence.

- What blessings and opportunities did you miss that God was offering?
- In what ways did you see God meet you?
- What brought you joy? What brought you sadness?
- As the Spirit reveals these things, turn them into prayers.
- Ask God to search your heart and to reveal the ways you sinned during the day.
- Confess your sins to God, knowing that as you do this, He has promised to forgive you and to cleanse you.

**Commitment.** Release yourself to God for the night. Pray that you may drift into sleep; conscious of God’s loving presence.

# MONDAY

## 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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*“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” James 5:16*

*“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.”*  
Proverbs 8:17

Before the global pandemic (COVID-19), I did not know what SIP stood for: Sheltering-in-Place. The SIP order that came down in March 2020 has challenged everyone to seek with all their hearts new patterns, opportunities, and pathways for contact and communications with the closing of schools, churches, businesses, parks, trails, entertainment venues, etc. I felt disconnected and alone. Did you, too? And added was the anxiety that physical presence could lead to grave or serious illness.

Although physical absence became the “new normal,” most of us are blessed with many ways to communicate with beloved family, friends, co-workers, etc. How many of us have become adept at Zoom and Team meetings? With longing hearts, we call, text, FaceTime, send an emoji, or email our thoughts, needs, news and work. Our Sunday night, multigeneration family dinner became a “scheduled” Zoom call. We have the ability of unceasing communication. Prayer is communication with God. Is your prayer life rich in communications with God?

Prayer reflects faith in and dependence on God; and it includes petitions, adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. The Bible is full of faith-filled

prayers that are aligned with God's character and will and that promote His cause on earth. Our prayers are powerful when they are specific, expectant, and reflect God's unlimited power. God delights to hear and answer the prayers of His people (Exodus 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7; Acts 17:24-28). When we go to God in prayer, it demonstrates faith in God's power and His compassion for the needs of others. When prayers are answered, God receives the glory!

When I believe in the power of prayer, I talk to God each day and I know He listens. I expect Him to respond through His Word, people, and circumstances.

Prayer meets inner needs: One who prays will receive: freedom from fear (Psalm 118:5-6), strength of soul (Psalm 138:3), guidance and satisfaction (Isaiah 58:9-11), wisdom and understanding (Daniel 9:20-27), deliverance from harm (Joel 2:32), rewards (Matthew 6:6), good gifts (Luke 11:13), fullness of joy (John 16:23-24), peace (Philippians 4:6-8), and freedom from anxiety (1 Peter 5:7).

## QUESTIONS

What do you believe about prayer? What challenges do you face in your belief in the power of prayer?

# TUESDAY

## 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Some of us are more emotional than others (can you relate?). We ride the highs and lows of our hopes and dreams of life like a roller coaster. When we are at the top, our hands are raised with shouts of exultant joy; but when we are down, the ride feels like a tragic ending. Other people are more consistent in their emotional constitution, but they can miss out on the thrill of experiencing true joy. Whatever our personality or emotional makeup, God’s will for all of us is to focus our hearts completely on Him so that we constantly and consistently rejoice, pray, and thank Him. In Charles H. Spurgeon’s sermon on March 10, 1872, “Pray Without Ceasing,” he teaches, “In everything give thanks. When joy and prayer are married, their firstborn is gratitude.”

The attitudes of most people around us are heavily influenced by the circumstances of life. But as followers of Jesus, we are different. The grace of God and His mercy, love, wisdom, and strength can lead our minds and hearts so that circumstances do not overshadow God’s presence and purposes. When life’s circumstances seem unfair or are unfair, we focus on God’s kindness and forgiveness and find genuine contentment. Instead of fixing on our problems and trying to fix them ourselves, we turn to God in prayer, casting all our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7), and we remember to pray for others who need God’s help.

Rate yourself on a scale of zero (nada) to ten (doing great) in focusing on God during difficult times in your life.

Each of us has asked, “What is God’s will for my life?” God’s will is not too difficult. First and foremost, it is looking to God and letting His character fill our hearts and minds every moment of every day. In every situation, good and bad, we give thanks—not for the problem (that makes no sense), but for God’s presence with us during those problems (Isaiah 41:10-11) and for the hope that God will use them to accomplish good things.

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*

## **QUESTIONS**

What are some situations you face today in which you need to rejoice, pray, and give thanks? What difference will it make?



# WEDNESDAY

## 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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*“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

You may have trouble discerning God’s will in some areas of your life; but rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks are always God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. The last phrase gives the underlying clue as to how we can begin to obey these commands: we must be “in Christ Jesus.” Without being in union with Him through His indwelling Holy Spirit, we could never come close to obeying these commands. We are placed in union with Christ the moment we trust in Him to save us from God’s judgment that we deserve due to our sins (Romans 10:9-10). As we learn to abide in and trust in Jesus to work through us, we will progressively become conformed to His image. Jesus was always rejoicing, always praying, and always thankful.

How can we develop a life-long habit of praying without ceasing? Does praying without ceasing mean that you must pray every waking moment? Neither Jesus nor Paul did that. It is helpful to know that the ancient Greek word translated “without ceasing” was used of a hacking cough. A person with a bad cough does not cough continuously, but often and repeatedly. It was also used of repeated military attacks. If an army attacked a city but failed, they would regroup and attack over and over until they won the victory.

Our prayers should be frequent and persistent. Like the friend who came at midnight to ask for a loaf of bread (Luke 11:5-13), we keep knocking until we get what we are after. Like the widow who kept bothering the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8), we keep coming back until we obtain what we were asking for. Prayer claims the promises of God in our trials. Laying hold of God's promises brings joy because we know that He is for us. (Romans 8:31-32).

1. This life-long process first depends on the Lord in every situation. Prayer is the language of trusting in the Lord.
2. Spend time in God's word and prayer every day (morning or evening). Pray the word back to God. Keep asking, seeking, and knocking (Luke 11:9-10).
3. Offer short prayers whenever you can. (Nehemiah 2:4-5).
4. Find a prayer partner or group for accountability, shared burdens, and joys.
5. Try using a prayer journal to track God's answers.

## QUESTIONS

What has most helped you to grow in prayer and thankfulness?

# Lenten Practice

Join us from 6-6:30pm for a community time of prayer.

# THURSDAY

**Matthew 21:22; Hebrews 11:6**

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[Jesus said,] *“Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”* Matthew 21:22

One of the greatest hindrances to prayer is failing to pray in faith. Matthew 21 opens with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem for the Passover week. This event-filled week will culminate with the arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. The scene of today’s text is Jesus and His disciples on their early morning walk back into the city. Using a fig tree and a local mountain, He teaches His disciples and us about the power of prayer.

Too often we divorce prayer from its source of power. If we see prayer as an activity to perform and check off our list of spiritual deeds for the day, we miss the heart, substance, and opportunity it offers. Jesus reminds us that prayer is connecting with the God of the universe, the One who spoke the stars into existence, the One who orchestrates all of history. His power is unrivaled, and His love is without limits.

Christ’s promise that we will receive anything we ask for comes with a condition: We must believe. Belief encompasses more than just knowing about Jesus. A believer must also act on this knowledge, combining faith and trust put into action. A torrent of words—even eloquent or flowery ones—does not please God, and intense emotions do not necessarily move His hand. But faith—even small, fledgling faith in God—makes Him smile and connects us with His heart and His purposes.

“Believing prayer” is characterized by genuine commitment to God’s desires. We long for God to be honored, not us. We want God to touch lives, not for us to be in control. To know what God wants, to know what His character is like, we search the Bible, and we listen to the Holy Spirit’s whisper as we sit silently with open hearts. This kind of prayer never demands that God act in a certain way at a certain time. Instead, believing prayer acknowledges our failures, needs, and limitations; and it focuses on God’s greatness and goodness to direct both the prayer and His answer.

What are some steps you can take this week to develop a habit of praying this way?

## **QUESTIONS**

How would you define and describe “believing prayer”?

# FRIDAY

## Genesis 32:22-32

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*“Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.”*  
Genesis 32:24

Some of us feel guilty for questioning God, but human faith has a long history of wrestling with Him. Jacob’s life had been characterized by lies and deceit. Repeatedly, he resorted to deception to get what he wanted, but finally his sins caught up with him. It was nighttime, and the next day he would face his brother Esau, whom he defrauded years earlier (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-41). Jacob feared for his life, and he was desperate for God’s help.

In an amazing act of grace, God stepped into the ring to wrestle Jacob. It was a formidable match. Jacob begged God to bless him and protect him; God seems to let Jacob win the fight. At the end, though, God touched and dislocated Jacob’s hip. Walking with a cane became the sustaining reminder for Jacob to *lean on God instead of his own cunning ways*. After he was blessed for his persistence (noted identity change), Jacob said, *“I have seen God face to face”* (v. 30).

God does not criticize us for asking questions, or even being angry with Him when we ask questions. Habakkuk begins his book asking, *“How long, LORD, must I call for help but You do not listen? Or cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but You do not save?”* (Habakkuk 1:1-2). Significantly, at the end of his wrestling, Habakkuk is content to rest in God declaring, *“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines ... yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior”* (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Ultimately, Jesus is our model. The long night in the Garden of Gethsemane is the scene of Jesus asking God to remove the cup from Him, sweating drops of blood in His agonized wrestling. Jesus finally declares, “... yet not my will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

If we are to follow Jesus, we need to come to the point of recognizing our wrongs and our weaknesses. It is only through God’s mercy that we are forgiven and by His grace that He sees us through the “darkness” of the night. The process through prayer is wrestling becoming resting in God.

## QUESTIONS

Describe a time when you wrestled with God. What was it about?  
How does wrestling with God change us and deepen our faith?

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You also might go to [GlenkirkChurch.org/become](https://www.glenkirkchurch.org/become) and prayerfully use this booklet to allow God to further guide you in “becoming a more fully devoted follower of Jesus.” After answering the questions in this booklet, please email the Spiritual Formation Team and let us know how we can help you to enable you to deepen your walk with Jesus ([become@glenkirkchurch.org](mailto:become@glenkirkchurch.org)). As with growth in any area of our lives, even growth in relationships, without intentionality it does not happen. Make a commitment during this season to be intentional.

# Lenten Practices

## PRAYER WALKING

“Prayer walking” is a way of saturating a particular place and people with prayer. This discipline draws us out of prayers that are limited to our immediate concerns and into a larger circle of God’s loving attention. It involves praying by yourself or with others, walking through a neighborhood, around the church, at your place of work, or at school.

As you walk up and down your block in the company of Jesus, pray in Jesus’ name for the people who live in each house. Ask Him to tell you what to pray for. You might take time to walk around the outer edges of Glenkirk, asking God for His Spirit to be present and asking His Spirit to empower the church services and activities that occur on Glenkirk’s campus. Or you might take time to walk by the desks and offices of those you work with, taking time to pray for each individual as God leads.

## PRAYING THE LORD’S PRAYER

On Saturday set aside four time periods (morning, noon, early evening, before bed) to pray through the Lord’s Prayer slowly one petition at a time. Pause after each petition to ask God how you might expand on and apply that petition to your life, and what He would have you confess concerning that petition. Again, be mindful of your emotions. What are your feelings saying to you?



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