

Days of
40
Prayer

Foreword

When Jesus' disciples were with him, they observed him spending time in prayer. Struck by what they saw, they approached him and asked, "LORD, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)." As important as prayer is, it doesn't necessarily come naturally to us. The best way to grow in our prayer life is to simply spend time praying. But where to begin? What does communication with the unseen God look like?

In Ephesians 6:18 it says,

"[P]ray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

This scripture suggests that there are many kinds of prayers to be prayed and that prayer can take many different forms. I find this incredibly freeing, that there isn't necessarily a right or wrong way to pray. That being said, it can be helpful to our individual prayer lives to see different examples of prayer and to be encouraged to pray in accordance with them. The goal of this packet is to familiarize us with different kinds of prayer in the hopes that the LORD would use this to teach us how to pray and enrich our prayer lives both in their consistency and in the quality of the time spent. The ideas in this packet are only a few examples of kinds of prayer that have been enriching to our prayer lives, and so we pass them on to you with the hope that they will also bless you. In this packet, you will find prayers of thanksgiving and adoration, prayers of intercession, prayer designed to help hear the voice of Jesus in your life, prayers of the saints who have come before us, excerpts from the Book of Common prayer and more. There is an excerpt for each day for the next 40 days.

Most of these prayer guides are intended for your use in solitude, but our prayer lives should include time to pray with other believers as well. Each week, there will be a prayer exercise designed for gathered group prayer. We encourage you to find 2 or 3 people to gather with on a weekly basis to pray with for 30 minutes to 1 hour starting day 1 of your 40 days of prayer. This is both to process through what

you are learning as well as to experience prayer within the gathered body of Christ.

As you engage our LORD and Savior, we lift you up in prayer as the Apostle Paul did for the church in Ephesus,

"[We] kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. [we] pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And [we] pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Amen!

—The UCM staff

Day 1: Kickoff group exercise

This activity is a group prayer exercise. Schedule a time to get together with your 40 Day prayer partners and share with each other on the following questions:

1. What does your prayer life currently look like? How often do you pray? In what ways do you find praying difficult?
2. When you pray, what do you typically pray for? Do you pray in different ways or do your prayers typically look the same?
3. Do you sense God talking back to you when you pray?
4. What are some ways that you hope to grow during the 40 Days of Prayer?
5. Take some time to pray for one another going into the 40 Days of Prayer. Lift up the difficulties that you have faced praying in the past. Ask the LORD to grow you in the specific ways that you have individually identified. Ask God, as the disciples did, to teach you to pray.

Day 2: Acknowledging God's presence

*“Be Still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”*

(Psalm 46:10)

Sometimes we think that our time spent with God is not successful unless there are fireworks, we receive some grand revelation, or God's presence is manifest to us in some special way. This can lead to a very strange idea that is harmful to our faith, that God is present sometimes, but other times is not. This couldn't be further from the truth. I think we could benefit from simply acknowledging in faith that God is present, even if it makes you feel no different, even if it is accompanied by no further revelation. Proclaim it as truth and then soak in how good it is that you are never alone.

Today, let your prayer throughout the day be “God, I know that You are with me. I acknowledge Your presence is in this place.”

For Further reading: Psalm 139

Day 4: Conversational prayer

Prayer is talking to God. We talk to him and we expect to hear from him. If that isn't a conversation, I don't know what is.

Yet so often our prayers feeling like a one-sided rant, or whine, or request rather than a conversation. Yet God invites us through Jesus into the relationship that He had with Adam and Eve where he walked with them in the cool of the evening - Gen 1-3.

Today we are going to reclaim/explore/enjoy the conversational aspect of our prayer life.

Think of what you would do with your very best friend and go and do that with the LORD. Maybe you would go for a walk, maybe you chat over coffee at Starbucks—do something with the LORD where you can talk together. Now do what you need to do to have a conversation. I know people that place a chair across from them, or imagine him physically there - you do what you need to do to be able to have a conversation.

Then while you are having your conversation, be sure to take time to let the LORD talk and answer your questions and ask his own questions.

Sometimes this make us feel like we are playing make believe, but ask the LORD to show you how it would work for you to have a meaningful conversation with the LORD. He will show you, and in the process you will have a conversation—just try it!

Now throughout the rest of the day, let this conversation continue. Let your conversation with the LORD go on throughout your day. Gene Brietenbach said to us this year in Corefa Connections, “You are talking to yourself all the time in your head, why not talk to God.”

Day 5: The simple & repeated prayer

Henri Nouwen suggests having a simple, short prayer that we can say throughout the day as a way of continually focusing our mind and heart on God's presence. He recommends this kind of prayer especially when we are struggling with worry or when we find ourselves easily distracted in directing our thoughts towards God throughout the day. Such simple prayers when spoken slowly and repetitively with as much attentiveness as possible help us to move from the clutter of our minds to the stillness of our hearts, where God is found.

He suggests using words from the LORD's Prayer, or a meaningful Psalm or some other scripture. Personalizing and simplifying a passage of scriptures into a short, easily remembered prayer can be helpful. For example Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-34 about not worrying can be turned into this simple prayer:

“Father, I will not worry about my life, but I will seek first your kingdom LORD, for you care for me.”

Spend some focused time early on in your day slowly saying this prayer, reflecting on individual words and phrases in the prayer, letting your whole being reflect on what you are saying. Maybe write the prayer down on a small note card and then pray it both aloud and in your heart throughout the day—when you are walking to class, when you are driving in your car, when you are laying in bed at night. A simple prayer such as this, rooted in truth and prayed from the heart opens the door to God's healing presence in our lives.

Day 6: Listening through observing nature

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Romans 1:20

“The first time I saw Brother Lawrence...he told me that GOD had done him a singular favor, in his conversion at the age of eighteen. That in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time the leaves would be renewed and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the Providence and Power of GOD, which has never since been effaced from his soul. That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for GOD, that he could not tell whether it had increased during the more than forty years he had lived since.”

from *The Practice of the Presence of God, First Conversation.*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls his listeners to think about birds of the air and flowers of the field and makes powerful observations that enlighten us to the character of God and the care He has for His people. The Earth is the LORD’s and everything in it. He created our world and is constantly sustaining all that he has made, and it would appear that He has hidden a million messages under rocks, in the clouds overhead, or in the squirrel foraging for nuts. God is speaking through His creation!

Today take some time to go on a prayer walk outside. As you are walking and praying, observe the natural world around you and when you find something that’s striking, take some time to watch it for a while, taking in the patterns or behavior. Prayerfully ask, “how is this like God?” or “what does this say about God’s character?”

For Further reading: Psalm 8

Day 7: Te Deum (from the 4th century)

Fairly early on in the life of the Church, standard prayers were used. This helped to ensure that important facts and a correct understanding of the faith were brought to the worshipper’s mind. By the fourth century, regularly used prayers were being collected in written orders of service. This prayer, Te Deum, is named after its opening words in Latin. Use this prayer to help you focus your prayers in worship.

*You are God and we praise you; you are the LORD and we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father; all creation worships you.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and seraphim sing in endless praise,
Holy, holy, holy LORD, God of power and might;
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise you;
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you;
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the whole world the holy church acclaims you,
Father of majesty unbounded;
Your true and only Son worthy of all worship,
And the Holy Spirit advocate and guide.
You Christ are the King of glory,
The eternal Son of the Father.
When you became man to set us free
You did not abhor the virgin’s womb.
You overcame the sting of death
And opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God’s right hand in glory;
We believe that you will come and be our judge.
Come then LORD and help your people,
Bought with the price of your own blood;
And bring us with your saints
To glory everlasting.*

Day 8: Thanking God for what you've got

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:18

The words of St Paul to the Thessalonians are true for us today. One of the most wonderful things we can do for our hearts is to give thanks, but lots of things get in the way of thanking God. Sometimes life is hard, sometime life is good, so we forget that God is the only provider. It seems obvious that we should be thankful, and of course we know that God provides everything, but how often we forget to be truly thankful.

For today take some time in one room of your home and just look around the room and be thankful:

Here are some ideas:

- Look at the photos thank God for the people in your life.
- Be amazed that you are breathing, and that God has filled the room with air.
- Notice the books: isn't it amazing that you can read? Isn't it amazing that you have access to knowledge through books?
- Wonder that you have the means to be able to purchase/receive the things in the room.
- Is the heat on? Do you have a full belly?
- Maybe notice the absence of certain things, how has God protected you by denying you certain things.
- Etcetera etcetera etcetera. The list could go on and on.
- There is so much to be thankful for!!!! So simply look around and praise God for all HE has done!

Day 9: Turn off your toys, silence the noise

We live in a noisy world. Walk outside and you will most likely hear the sound of cars rushing by, the honking of horns. This makes it hard to find a little peace and quiet. But if that weren't bad enough we have a million temptations every day to fill our lives with even more noise. We have TV's, video games, car stereos and iPods vying for our attention seeking to steal away every precious moment of our lives.

A few days ago, we talked about how it can be hard to hear the voice of God if you live a life void of reflection. It can also be hard to hear the voice of God with all the other extra LOUD things in our lives. Today, take a day off from the technology. Turn off the music, the television, the video games. Take some time to soak in the silence.

Today, let this be your prayer:

"LORD, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the thousand raucous sounds which continuously assault them. Give me the spirit of the boy Samuel when he said to Thee, 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth.' Let me hear Thee speaking in my heart. Let me get used to the sound of Thy voice, that its tones may be familiar when the sounds of earth die away and the only sound will be the music of Thy speaking voice. Amen."

Prayer taken from Chp. 6 of The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

Day 12: Prayer as warfare

In prayer we contend along side our Heavenly father as we do battle for the side of Light. There are some grave things that we need to go to battle for: that friend who is suffering from illness, the loved ones in our lives that are plagued by addictive behavior, our own sins we can't break free from, all these things and much more deserve our fight, our battle in prayer.

Today use scripture as an aid to help you to pray as a warrior.

Pray Eph. 6 on behalf of some one you know needs help in their battle with evil, sickness, or pain.

Pick out a few Psalms that prays against enemies. Take an addictive behavior, a sin, a sickness, an injustice and pray in the words of the Psalmist against these things. Suggested psalms: Psalm 3,7, 55, 28, 139 (especially vs 19-22), 144, etc.

Example:

Arise, O LORD deliver me (my friend) strike all my enemies on the jaw (especially the enemy of pornography/cancer/depression that plagues my friend); break the teeth of of the wicked (break the mouth piece of pornography/cancer/depression that lures my friend away from you O God).

Psalm 3:7

Praise God for he promises to fight for us.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast armies with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.

² Ch 32:7,8

Day 13: Praying in response to sermons

Get out the your notes from the last sermon you listened to, if you don't have notes try to remember what you can of the last sermon you heard. We put this exercise on a Saturday so that Friday Night sermon would be fresh in you mind.

First Pray that the LORD would help you to remember the sermon and speak to you about what is important.

Read over the notes you took or think through the sermon. What were the main points? What were the scriptures that were used? What did you learn that was new? What was a good reminder? Was there anything that you need God to clarify for you? What was the LORD challenging you to?

Praise God for speaking, praise him for the community and for the preacher who God used to share the message?

Ask the LORD what he would have you do in response to the things you heard. Ask for the LORD to help you to put the things you learned into action.

Day 14: Eternal God

This prayer based on St. Augustine is one example of the prayers that were collected by the early Western church into what was called a 'sacramentary.' Early Roman 'sacramentaries' became the basis for prayers in the service books of the Reformation and later. Simple prayers like this can be written down and carried with you and read and prayed at various times throughout the day. You can also use this prayer as a springboard leading to your own personalized prayers.

*Eternal God,
the light of minds that know you,
the life of souls that love you,
the strength of the wills that serve you;
help us so to know you that we may truly love you,
so to love you that we may fully serve you,
whom to serve is perfect freedom.*

Day 15: Group listening reflection

This activity is a group prayer exercise. Schedule a time to get together with your 40 Day prayer partners

In this book there have been several "Listening Prayer Exercises." refer back to those and in your prayer groups share on the following questions:

1. Which of the Listening prayers were most helpful to you? What was helpful about it?
2. What did you feel like the LORD has been saying to you? Where were you when you felt like God was saying this to you? How did God communicate that to you?
3. How do you think you will live differently as a result of what God has been saying to you?
4. Pray in response to those things together, thanking God for the ways he has spoken to you. As you pray, pray listening to the Spirit, sharing any scriptures or encouragements that come to mind.

Day 16: The LORD's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13

Today, let the LORD's prayer be your prayer guide. This is what Jesus taught the disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. This is not just a prayer to be recited, but there are many personal prayers that can come out of this simple prayer. Let's take it a verse at a time.

⁹*This, then, is how you should pray:
"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

The word hallow means to honor as holy. Take some time right now to praise God for who he is, tell him how great you think He is. Worship Him for what He has done for you.

¹⁰*your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Take some time to pray for the people around you for God's will to be done in their lives. Pray about specific people and situations.

¹¹*Give us today our daily bread.*

Take some time bring your personal needs and concerns before the LORD.

¹²*Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Now take some time to be confessional with the LORD about sin in your life. Search your heart and acknowledge your need for grace before God with these particular issues. Make sure that you prayerfully receive his grace which is made abundant through Christ's blood that was shed.

¹³*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

Take some time to acknowledge the things that tempt you to sin against God. Ask God what he would have you do in light of the temptation.

Day 17: Repenting on behalf of others

Often when we think of prayers of repentance we of course, most naturally think of repenting of our own individual sins. And yet we see in Scripture examples of prayers where godly people such as Daniel and Nehemiah repented on behalf of their fellow Israelites. Now it is true that in the end each one of us must individually repent to be restored to God. Yet Richard Foster in his book on Prayer speculates that perhaps, somehow our repenting prayers on behalf of others may make it easier, more possible for them to turn on their own. He likens our prayers to releasing "little droplets of grace and mercy—droplets that perhaps can be shook off but certainly cannot be ignored."

Start by reading Daniel's prayer of repentance on behalf of Israel in Daniel 9:1-19.

Then choose those for whom you will pray prayers of repentance. It could be for CCF, for your school: WWU, WCC, SVC or it could be for our nation as a whole or for a more specific issue such as abortion, corporate exploitation or materialism. Reflect and begin to confess the various ways we have offended God and the consequences of our disobedience. Then begin to pray for God's mercy and a change of heart for those involved. Thank God that he is mighty to save and act in response to our prayers. Take time to consider if there is anything God might have you do in response to your prayers—and then do it!

Day 19: Prayer and posture

They say that good sitting posture can give you increased energy, better breathing, greater confidence, improved circulation, and greater overall health. They also say that it can make a difference in attentiveness. For instance it is easier to pay attention in class if you are sitting upright with your back straight than it is if you are slouching in your chair or have your head buried in your arms. Do you ever pay attention to your posture? Apparently it can make a big difference. What about body language? They say that our body language can constitute 50% or more of what we are communicating. Perhaps this is also true in our communication with God. Perhaps you have seen someone raising their hands or kneeling while the worship band is playing on a Friday night. What you saw may have seemed strange to you at the time, but their posture and body language was making significant statements to God.

Raising your hands could be saying to God, "I know right now that I need you," or "I am amazed at who you are." Holding your hands out palms up could mean, "I am open to receive from you," or "I want to offer to you." Lying prostrate (stretched out face down on the ground) could mean, "God my desire is to be totally submitted to you," or "I place myself at your mercy."

Today, find a place of solitude and be aware of your non-verbal communication with God. Incorporate your body language into your prayers. Take a moment or two to decide what you want to say to God and let your posture and body language conform to that statement. Hold that pose as long as you feel necessary, I would suggest holding that pose for a while to let that statement you want to make with God really soak in.

Day 20: Prayer and fasting

Fasting is one of those disciplines that is often overlooked in our society. We are a culture that is told that denying ourselves pleasure is old fashion and prudish. We are told, "we deserve it" to "just do it," "you owe it to yourself," "it's your right". If we want something it is very normal for us to just go and get it. I feel like a latte today, so I go and get one. By fasting we are fighting against the tide of culture, we are choosing to deny our bodies a small pleasurable thing. We are saying that the biological needs of our bodies are important, but they don't necessarily have rule over us. It is empowering to be able to tell your body "no". Today I want to encourage you to fast from food for one meal. Now if fasting from a meal would be unhealthy for you, you can fast from something else, you know who you are. And take the time that you would spend eating and pray instead. Pick one thing that God has been laying on your heart and do some praying for.

A word of caution/encouragement: if you are like me you may find yourself a bit crabby in between meals when you fast, let your crabbi-ness or hunger pains remind you of your hunger and need for God.

Day 21: Excerpts from the book of Common Prayer

The Book of Common Prayer was created by the Anglican church after it broke with Rome and was first published in 1549. It was the first official prayer book published in English. Through the years it has been employed by the church to conduct services and recite prayers. It contains prayers, for morning, evening, and the Holy Days. The prayers and readings are based on the church calendar.

There is something profound in praying prayers together united. The idea that a whole church would be united in prayer, saying the same words, it just seems powerful - not in a superstitious way, but in the beauty of having hearts and minds united in a cause and hoping for the same thing, and talking to our one Father about these things. Doesn't it feel like carrying on a legacy to think that you are praying the same prayers that believers have been praying for 500 years?

I have selected a few prayers from the Common Book of prayer for us to pray together today, be sure to pray each prayer thoughtfully, don't just read or recite but think about the words you are praying:

5. For Peace Among the Nations

Almighty God our heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

14. For the Unity of the Church

O God the Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one LORD, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith

and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our LORD. Amen.

28. In Times of Conflict

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our LORD. Amen.

30. For the Unemployed

Heavenly Father, we remember before you those who suffer want and anxiety from lack of work. Guide the people of this land so to use our public and private wealth that all may find suitable and fulfilling employment, and receive just payment for their labor; through Jesus Christ our LORD. Amen.

49. For the Aged

Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our LORD. Amen.

56. For the Victims of Addiction

O blessed LORD, you ministered to all who came to you: Look with compassion upon all who through addiction have lost their health and freedom. Restore to them the assurance of your unfailing mercy; remove from them the fears that beset them; strengthen them in the work of their recovery; and to those who care for them, give patient understanding and persevering love. Amen.

Day 22: The LORD's Prayer group exercise

This activity is a group prayer exercise. Schedule a time to get together with your 40 Day prayer partners. You may remember going through The LORD's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13 (Day 16) Today, let each verse of this prayer guide your prayer as a group. Read each of these verses individually, and after the reading of each verse, take some time to be guided into prayer by that verse.

⁹*This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

The word hallow means to honor as holy. Take some time right now to praise God for who he is, tell him how great you think He is. Worship Him for what He has done for you.

*¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Take some time to pray for the people around you for God's will to be done in their lives. Pray about specific people and situations.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

Take time bring your personal needs and concerns before the LORD.

*¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Now take some time to be confessional with the LORD about sin in your life. Search your heart and acknowledge your need for grace before God with these particular issues. Make sure that you prayerfully receive his grace which is made abundant through Christ's blood that was shed.

*¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

Take some time to acknowledge the things that tempt you to sin against God. Ask God what he would have you do in light of the temptation.

Day 23: Listening to your life

“If God speaks anywhere, it is into our personal lives that he speaks.”

Frederick Buechner

In the midst of the highs and the lows, the obvious and the obscure, the extraordinary and the humdrum moments that make up our days God is speaking. Prayer in part involves reflecting on these moments of our days, but it is a reflection that with God's insight is meant to help us perceive the movement of God in our lives—to hear the words God might be speaking to us in these everyday events of our lives. This reflective exercise is ultimately meant to help you recognize more clearly what at times seems to be the somewhat hidden nature of His presence in your life.

Pick a recent event or a relationship or even a routine aspect of your life at present. Write a bit about this. What aspect of this event, routine or relationship have you found pleasing or engaging? Or what aspect have you found difficult, frustrating, boring or discouraging? How do you feel about this part of your life in general? When you pray about it, or if you were to pray about it how do/would you pray? Where would you give thanks? What would you ask God for in this situation? Take some time to talk to God about this.

Now, imagine God is speaking to you about this situation/relationship—what do you think He is saying? Any Scriptures that come to mind? One idea to help you reflect on these last few questions is to write a letter to yourself from God.

Day 24: Prayer walk through your campus

Have you ever walked across campus and really paid attention to the things around you? Have you ever noted each face that you passed? Have you ever wondered about all the things about the world that are being taught on your campus? Have you ever slowed down and talked to the LORD about these things?

For today's activity take a prayer walk.

Around the dorm or your house or neighborhood

Possible Activities: Pray for each person. Pray against sin and Satan. Pray over relationships. Pray for the kingdom to come. Lay your hands on furniture and doors. If you run into a friend ask them if they would like prayer.

On campus

Possible Activities: Pray for students and professors to find Christ. Pray for each Christian group on campus. Pray that God's truth would be proclaimed. Ask God to show you what He is wanting to do in each arena. Then, pray it. Ask the LORD to allow you to partner in His work. Go to the places on campus and pray for what goes on there: library, VU, Parks Hall, Arntzen, etc. etc.

On your way to school

Possible Activities: Pray for the people you pass. Thank God for the day. Pray for the buildings/houses/apartments you pass. Pray for those who walk the same route as you. Pray that the LORD would reveal Himself through nature to others.

Day 25: Searching for God's guidance

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:8-10

What good works does God have in store for you today? This morning take some time to pray through your day. Pray over all the things you will be doing today and ask the LORD to use you to do His good works, which have already been prepared for you. Ask the LORD "What good works have you laid out for me to do today?" – take a moment to listen to where He leads you.

Now as you go throughout your day, in everything that you do ask for the LORD to do good through you. In every conversation, while you walk along, in every class, at every meal, in everything let your quiet and constant prayer be: "LORD, do your good through me."

Day 26: Prayers for the suffering

We are bombarded with the up to the minute new flashes, videos and images of suffering in our world. Within a matter of seconds I can see mind-numbing images of bodies lining the streets of some far off place devastated by an earthquake or the hollow empty eyes of a nameless child orphaned by war or disease. It is easy to react in two unhelpful extremes: angry despair or uncaring apathy. But God invites us to pray--to offer prayers on behalf of the suffering. When we pray for those who suffer we fulfill the commands to “mourn with those who mourn” and to “bear one another’s burdens.” Prayer is one way to enter into the sufferings of the world in a redemptive and healing way.

Take some time today while online and check out the news--pick a story or situation in the headlines and pray. Try to imagine what those suffering must feel? What thoughts and emotions are going through their heart? Do they wonder where God is? What would hope look like for them today? Let these questions help guide your prayers. You might use a psalm like Ps. 42, 46 or 88 to help you pray prayers on behalf of the suffering.

O Holy Spirit of God, so many hurt today. Help me to stand with them in their suffering. I do not really know how to do this. My temptation is to offer some quick prayer and send them off rather than endure with them the desolation of suffering. Show me the pathway into their pain.

In the name and for the sake of Jesus.

Amen

prayer by Richard Foster

Day 27: Re-visit intercession

Today I want to encourage you to review the things you have been praying for this quarter. Has God answered your prayers? Have you seen Him moving? It is good for us to look back and acknowledge God’s answers to our prayers. It builds our faith and encourages us. Reviewing also helps us to persevere in prayer, and expectantly await God’s answer to our prayers. I have been inspired by the life of George Mueller an evangelist in England in the 1800s. Reportedly he and his wife sensed the LORD calling them to stop taking a salary and not seek out any money or provision from anyone, but God alone.

In light of this decision he kept an account book of his prayer request. He would record his prayer on one page and on the next page he would record the date and how his prayer had been answered. Throughout his life God provided time and time again. Mr. Mueller not only survived, but was able to establish several orphanages, pastor a church, distribute Bibles, send missionaries aboard and do much more all as a result of prayer and trust in the LORD to provide.

Not only did George pray, but he prayed persistently. Mr. Mueller prayed for 27 years that a friend of his would become a Christian, but it wasn’t until George Mueller’s funeral that this man accepted Christ.

George Mueller once said, “...I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down and when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands and tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right and for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. George Mueller never gives up!”

In light of the prayers you have reviewed, pray. Thank the LORD for the work he is doing. Be persistent for the prayers that still need to be answered. Write down a few prayer requests and leave space to report how God answered your prayers when He does.

Day 28: Instrument of peace

This prayer cannot officially be traced back to St. Francis of Assisi, yet it has traditionally been credited to him and certainly is reflective of his spirit. This prayer makes a good starting place as you reflect on and pray for your active role in the lives of those around you as well as praying for the broader world.

*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,
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled as to console,
not so much to be understood as to understand,
not so much to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
it is in dying, that we awake to eternal life.*

Day 29: Group intercession

This activity is a group prayer exercise. Schedule a time to get together with your 40 Day prayer partners. In this book there have been several “Intercessory Prayer Exercises.” Refer back to those and in your prayer groups share on the following questions:

1. As you have been praying for people and situations around you, what is one thing you’ve been praying for that has been particularly on your heart?
2. Has God answered any of your prayers? Take some time to share w/ each other what you prayed and how God has answered it.
3. Is there anything that you have been praying for that you feel God is calling you to continue to pray for? Share with the group.
4. Now take some time to lift up these things together. Lift up each other’s prayers before God. Thank God for the prayers He has answered.

Day 31: Being the answer to my prayers

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the LORD of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness... These twelve Jesus sent out...

Matthew 9:35-10:5

You have been praying in a variety of ways for a variety of things this quarter thus far. Take a moment to think over/remember/pray over some of the things you have been praying about/for this quarter. As the LORD brings things/people/situations to mind, ask Him how he might use you to answer the prayers you have prayed.

If there is a friend you have been praying for to come to know Christ, how can you share the gospel with them?

If there is someone in your life who needs comfort or care, how would the LORD use you?

Have you prayed for your community, and is there a way you can answer that prayer in your community?

Day 32: Prayers for the persecuted church

Jesus did not promise us a life of comfort and ease, as a matter of fact he said the exact opposite:

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:22b

Here in the US we are fortunate to have so much, and we enjoy incredible freedom when it comes to our practice of religion. But not everyone enjoys our freedoms! All over the world our Christian brothers and sisters are suffering and experience persecution because of their Christian faith. Today we want to join as a community and pray for those who are persecuted. So for prayer today go and explore The Voice of The Martyrs website. You will find updates to pray, a restricted area map, news updates and much more. Go explore. Go Pray. <http://www.persecution.com>

Here is an explanation of Voice of the Martyrs:

About VOM

The Voice of the Martyrs is a non-profit, inter-denominational Christian organization dedicated to assisting the persecuted church worldwide. VOM was founded in 1967 by Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, who was imprisoned 14 years in Communist Romania for his faith in Christ. His wife, Sabina, was imprisoned for three years. In the 1960s, Richard, Sabina, and their son, Mihai, were ransomed out of Romania and came to the United States. Through their travels, the Wurmbbrands spread the message of the atrocities that Christians face in restricted nations, while establishing a network of offices dedicated to assisting the persecuted church.

Day 34: Day of silence

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Psalm 46:10

A song of ascents. Of David.

“My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.

“But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

“O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.

Psalm 131

When I was in college I had an eccentric but wonderful friend who would practice A Day of Silence. He would spend one whole day without talking - if he was forced to speak he would write instead. It drove his peer team leader crazy in his one to one, and I don't know what he did for his classes because he was a German Major, but I do know that he stuck to his day without talking. A challenging feat.

This feat makes me think of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, struck speechless on doubting the news the angel brought about his new son! Zechariah knew that Israel's promise was coming and yet he had to keep it to himself for nine months, NINE Months of Silence! That is a long time to ponder, and think.

Our lives are sometimes so filled with chatter, some of it is great edifying chatter, some of it is harmless fun fluff chatter and some of our chatter can be hurtful, but so often we just chatter chatter chatter. I have a little brother who is a relatively silent fellow, but he chatters too. He chatters away on facebook.

Today I am proposing a break from the chatter. I am *not* proposing nine months or even a whole day, but I am asking you to spend a chunk of time in silence. You can pick: maybe you would be silent between breakfast and lunch, or maybe you would choose between six and nine at night. Try to pick a time where you will be challenged in your silence.

In the silence of your own voice listen to the voice of God. Listen to what God is saying. As you walk through campus not looking for someone to talk to or some way to fill your head with noise, look to see what God is saying. As you sit with your friends quietly, pray to God to help you hear your friends well, pray for them as they talk and you listen.

Start today off with prayer in a quiet place - no music, no iPod, no podcast, no one, and be still: ponder God and the verses at the beginning of the exercise. Then think through your day all the while listening to God: What part of your day would he like you to try to be silent? Why do you talk so much, or so little? What is God telling you about your speech? Now go and find some silence.

Day 35: The Breastplate

This prayer originates from Patrick of Ireland, born in England at age 16 he was captured by Irish pirates and forced to become a slave for 6 years. As a slave he became a might pray-er. Eventually he escaped, but eventually returned as a missionary and is considered to be one of the most significant influences in the conversion of the Irish to Christianity. This prayer has been developed by a later writer from Patrick's original version.

*I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, his might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His Hand to guide, his shield to ward;
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.
Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ bedside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.
I bind unto myself the name,
The Strong name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One, the One in Three,
Of whom all nature hath creation;
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word,
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

Day 36: Scripture sharing group exercise

This activity is a group prayer exercise. Schedule a time to get together with your 40 Day prayer partners.

“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.”

1 Corinthians 14:26-28

Take 5 or 10 minutes in your prayer group to silently pray and listen to the Lord on behalf of your prayer partners. Ask the Lord, “Is there something I have that you want me to share to build up the group?” Things that the Lord may encourage you to share:

1. Are there any scriptures that have stuck out to you lately? What are they? Would the group benefit from hearing them?
2. What have you been learning lately? Could this be a word to encourage your brothers/sisters?
3. Is there a worship song that has been speaking to you lately? You could lead the group in an a cappella song to the Lord.
4. Does the Lord have a tongue for you to share and interpret?

The above scripture says that all of these types of things strengthen the church, and we need to be ministered to in these ways. So take some time as a group to worship the Lord and listen to the Spirit on each other's behalf.

Day 37: Prayers of the doubting

“Lord I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.”

Mark 9:24

Doubt is a very normal part of the Christian life; every Christian has experienced it at various times in their life. We might think that doubt would be a big obstacle to our praying—and indeed it can be. The Scriptures say that

“...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6

Yet at the same time doubt can become a catalyst to our seeking and our praying. Thomas doubted that Christ had risen from the dead and yet Thomas continued to gather with the other disciples and Christ in his love and mercy answered Thomas’s doubts by revealing himself to Thomas. Various Psalms express uncertainty about God—about his goodness, his intentions towards us, his trustworthiness. And yet these doubts are expressed in the very context of prayer towards God—an act of faith. Genuine doubts breathed out in sincere prayer can be enough to fan faith into flame.

Where do you doubt? Is it doubt about his existence? Is it uncertainty in his sovereign power in this world? Or in his love and care for you? Write these out—express them to God in your own Psalm. It doesn’t need to be eloquent or refined. Raw feelings are fine. He is big enough to handle your doubts and questions. In the midst of this invite Him to reveal Himself to you. Ask him to bring resolution. Ask him to help you doubt your doubts. Take time to remember that doubt is a normal part of growing faith.

Day 38: Prayers of waiting

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers... They all joined together constantly in prayer...”

Acts 1:3-5,14

It is much easier to respond when the Lord gives us a clear yes or no answer, but what about when the answer is wait? What about when we feel that we are hearing nothing from God when we pray? As a child I can remember asking my parents for something and getting the “wait” answer. “Can I open my presents now?” “No, you must wait till Christmas morning.” “Can I drive the car to the grocery store today?” Not until you’re older.” At the time I never liked hearing this answer, but now that I am older, I know that my parents had good reasons for telling me to wait. The same is true with God.

Maybe you have heard the Lord tell you to wait on something that you have asked him about recently. I don’t know why he wants you to wait, but I do know that in the end, the waiting will end up to be the best thing. But we get some hints on how we can respond. In the book of Acts, we see Jesus telling the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. And we see from verse 14 that for them, waiting was a very active process. It says that they gathered together constantly in prayer! This shows not only that they were patient, but that they trusted that God would indeed give what he said He would when the time was right. Today I encourage you to pray about the thing(s) that the Lord has told you to wait on. Pray re-affirming that you trust the Lord in His decision to withhold what you are asking for the time being. Pray for direction as to what you should do during the waiting period.

Day 39: Psalm 23

Today, let Psalm 23 be your prayer guide. Take time to meditate on each verse and its significance. Let these verses speak to your current circumstance. In what ways has the LORD been your Shepherd? What in your life feels like “the valley of the shadow of death?” Prayerfully entrust it to God’s care. Proclaim the promises that God makes here over your life. He restores you, leads and guides you, He is with you, He comforts you, His presence is reason to not fear evil, you will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

¹*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*

²*He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,*

³*he restores my soul.*

*He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.*

⁴*Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,*

*for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.*

⁵*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

⁶*Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.*

Day 40: You’re on your own

For the last 40 days, you have been praying “in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (Ephesians 6:18).” We hope that the LORD has met you in this endeavor. But now here we are, the last day. Our encouragement to you is that you would not let the journey you’ve been on end here, but continue to pray all kinds of prayers on all occasions. So today you’re on your own. We have given you some ideas that have helped us in our prayer lives. How you spend this prayer time is up to you. If you like you can re-visit exercises from previous days. But we encourage you to keep up the habit of praying each day both in solitude and with other believers.

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the LORD. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the LORD will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

-James 5:13-16