

Lent 2024

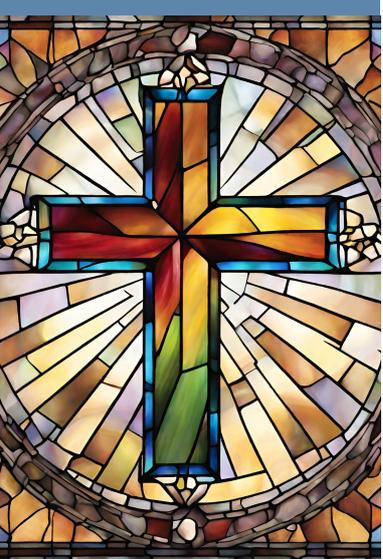


Introduction

Lent is an invitation to put down everything we have picked up in this journey of life in order to take hold of the only One who can truly satisfy our heart's deepest longings. It is a call to turn back, and experience a season of refreshing for our souls (Acts 3:19).

We are inviting you to join us on a journey this Lenten season through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John— four books of the Bible that give us an inside look at Jesus' life and ministry. As you read each account, it is our prayer that you'll experience new joy through a greater knowledge of Him and that you'll remain satisfied in Christ alone.

Come with open hands, and freely receive.

A stained glass cross with a central figure, set within a circular frame of colorful glass mosaic.

Carson

Major Carson Decker
Territorial Candidates Secretary

Reading Guide

- Day 1 Matthew 1-3
- Day 2 Matthew 4-6
- Day 3 Matthew 7-9
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- Day 5 Spiritual Practice 1 - The Examen
- Day 6 Matthew 13-14
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Reading Guide

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- Day 40 Spiritual Practice 6 - Lament
- Day 41 John 13-14
- Day 42 John 15-16
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- Day 44 John 19-20
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- Day 47 Spiritual Practice 7 - Solitude



Week 1 Daily Readings

- Day 1 Matthew 1-3
- Day 2 Matthew 4-6
- Day 3 Matthew 7-9
- Day 4 Matthew 10-12

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
- What kind of feelings is this passage evoking in you - attraction or resistance? Why do you think that is?
- What might God be inviting you to be, know, understand, feel, or even do?
- What is your response to God based on what you have read and encountered?



Week 1 Journal Page



Week 2 Daily Readings

Day 6 Matthew 13-14

Day 7 Matthew 15-16

Day 8 Matthew 17-18

Day 9 Matthew 19-20

Day 10 Matthew 21-22

Day 11 Matthew 23-24

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
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Week 2 Journal Page



Week 3 Daily Readings

Day 13 Matthew 25-26

Day 14 Matthew 27-28

Day 15 Mark 1-3

Day 16 Mark 4-6

Day 17 Mark 7-Mark

Day 18 Mark 10-12

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
- What kind of feelings is this passage evoking in you - attraction or resistance? Why do you think that is?
- What might God be inviting you to be, know, understand, feel, or even do?
- What is your response to God based on what you have read and encountered?



Week 3 Journal Page



Week 4 Daily Readings

Day 20 Mark 13-14

Day 21 Mark 15-16

Day 22 Luke 1-3

Day 23 Luke 4-6

Day 24 Luke 7-9

Day 25 Luke 10-12

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
- What kind of feelings is this passage evoking in you - attraction or resistance? Why do you think that is?
- What might God be inviting you to be, know, understand, feel, or even do?
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Week 4 Journal Page



Week 5 Daily Readings

Day 27	Luke	13-14
Day 28	Luke	15-16
Day 29	Luke	17-18
Day 30	Luke	19-20
Day 31	Luke	21-22
Day 32	Luke	23-24

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
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Week 5 Journal Page



Week 6 Daily Readings

Day 34	John 1-2
Day 35	John 3-4
Day 36	John 5-6
Day 37	John 7-8
Day 38	John 9-10
Day 39	John 11-12

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
- What kind of feelings is this passage evoking in you - attraction or resistance? Why do you think that is?
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Week 6 Journal Page



Week 7 Daily Readings

Day 41	John 13-14
Day 42	John 15-16
Day 43	John 17-18
Day 44	John 19-20
Day 45	John 21
Day 46	1 Corinthians 15

Questions to Consider

- What word, phrase or image is the Spirit drawing you toward from today's reading? Why do you think that is?
- How does this passage connect with your life?
- What kind of feelings is this passage evoking in you - attraction or resistance? Why do you think that is?
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Week 7 Journal Page



Spiritual Practices



Spiritual Practice 1 - The Examen

The Examen is a daily or weekly prayer exercise that can open us up to both the difficult and beautiful in our lives, relationship and profession. It is a useful way of reflecting alone or with others on what God is saying to us.

Questions can include:

For what moment today am I most grateful?

For what moment today am I least grateful?

When did I give and receive the most love today?

When did I give and receive the least love today?

What was the most life-giving part of my day?

What was the most life-thwarting part of my day?

When today did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others and myself?

When today did I have the least sense of connection?

Where was I aware of living out of the fruit of the Spirit?

Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?

Where did I experience "desolation"?

Where did I find "consolation"?

The examen is a wonderful tool for discerning the places you feel most alive, most grateful, most present to the fruit of the Spirit as well as the times and places where you do not. The examen invites attention to both low and high points, recognizing both of these as an invitation to prayer. Some find it helpful to keep notes on what they find in this practice. As you look over your notes weekly, monthly, yearly, it can provide a sense of clarity and direction for you. You can see a broader sweep of things that brought joy and gave life and the things that were life-draining. Simply put—it's the practice of finding God in your everyday. This may work for you and be revolutionary, others will find it tedious. But don't worry, as we cultivate our prayer practices, we will discover new and meaningful ways for each of us to connect with God.



Spiritual Practice 1 - The Examen

Suggested guide

1

Become aware of God's presence.

Look back on the day and note the times you felt God was with you, assisting. Feel God with you now and ask to become more conscious of God's presence. It may be helpful to repeat a phrase like, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or any other prayer that connects you to God the Father.

2

Look back with gratitude.

Review the past 24 hours and notice what you're thankful for. What happened to make you feel blessed? Take a moment to give thanks to God for providing you with these blessings.

3

Take an honest look at your day

Note everything that happened over the course of the past 24 hours, your interactions with others, and your emotions. We often rush through each day, not pausing to reflect. Doing a deep, honest reflection of the past day causes us to learn more about ourselves and improve our future actions.

4

Choose one part of the day and pray about it

From doing your review, you might find something God is directing you to work on an emotion, a relationship that needs mending, an unpleasant situation. Pray for it, ask God's guidance to resolve it.

5

Pray for tomorrow

Ask God to guide you tomorrow, leading you to your highest purpose. Feel deep gratitude, knowing God has already answered your prayer and tomorrow is already blessed. Take some deep breaths, and know that all is well.



Notes



Spiritual Practice 2 - Hour of Prayer

If we're honest with ourselves, many of us are dissatisfied with our prayer life. We will admit that we don't spend enough time in prayer, and we wish we knew how to make prayer exciting and for it to seem worthwhile.

The hour of prayer takes 12 sections found in scripture and asks for a five minute focus on each. While an hour might seem like a long time, five minutes on each section sounds doable. The prayer wheel is located on the next page but we're going to go through some brief sections together.

We start and end with **Praise**. Praise aligns us with God, reminds us of the big, Holy and awesome God that we serve. It focuses our attention upwards. It is the act of divine adoration. Select a theme for your praise—expand on it as much as possible. At the end of the hour focus on God's greatness.

Waiting - Spending time alone with God in the silence. No music, no words, as little background noise as possible. Just you and God together. Silence in the outside world as you seek to create silence within you as well. Focus on the "love" aspect of God's nature. Rest in God's love.

Confession - Once we have praised and sat in God's presence we can continue, and we must immediately deal with the issue of personal sin. Andrew Murray reminds us, "God cannot hear the prayers on our lips often because the desires of our heart after the world cry out to Him much more strongly and loudly than our desire for Him". Often a list of our failures pop up, we get discouraged, we stop praying and the Devil has won. We need to remember God's promises to withstand the attack: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We verbalize our shortcomings and admit we have sinned. Confession is conditional to cleansing. It is necessary not only for effective prayer but for spiritual growth. Sometimes we need to ask God to reveal any hidden or unconfessed sin in us—and then we can deal with it.



Spiritual Practice 2 - Hour of Prayer

Praying the Scriptures - Examine a passage from the Gospels, the Epistles, Psalms or Proverbs. Look carefully for specific ways to apply each verse to prayer. As you study a verse (or verses), ask yourself what petition this passage prompts you to make, or what promise this passage contains that stands directly behind a specific petition. Develop actual prayers based on the thoughts and phrases of the Scripture and offer it to the Lord.

Watching - Take a few moments during prayer to become spiritually alert. Watch for the methods Satan may try to use to hinder your Christian walk that day. Prayerfully claim power to defeat Satan in each of these areas. Read denominational or missionary-evangelism magazines to help become alert to the specific needs in God's work around the world. Pray for international news developments and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal further spiritual facts about these needs. The Spirit will guide you as you pray.

Intercession - Praying for others. Specific people, places and countries, anyone God is laying on your heart.

Petition - Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to only ask for the things that are in God's will and that will bring glory and honor to God. Offer any specific needs for the day. Explain to God why you are asking.

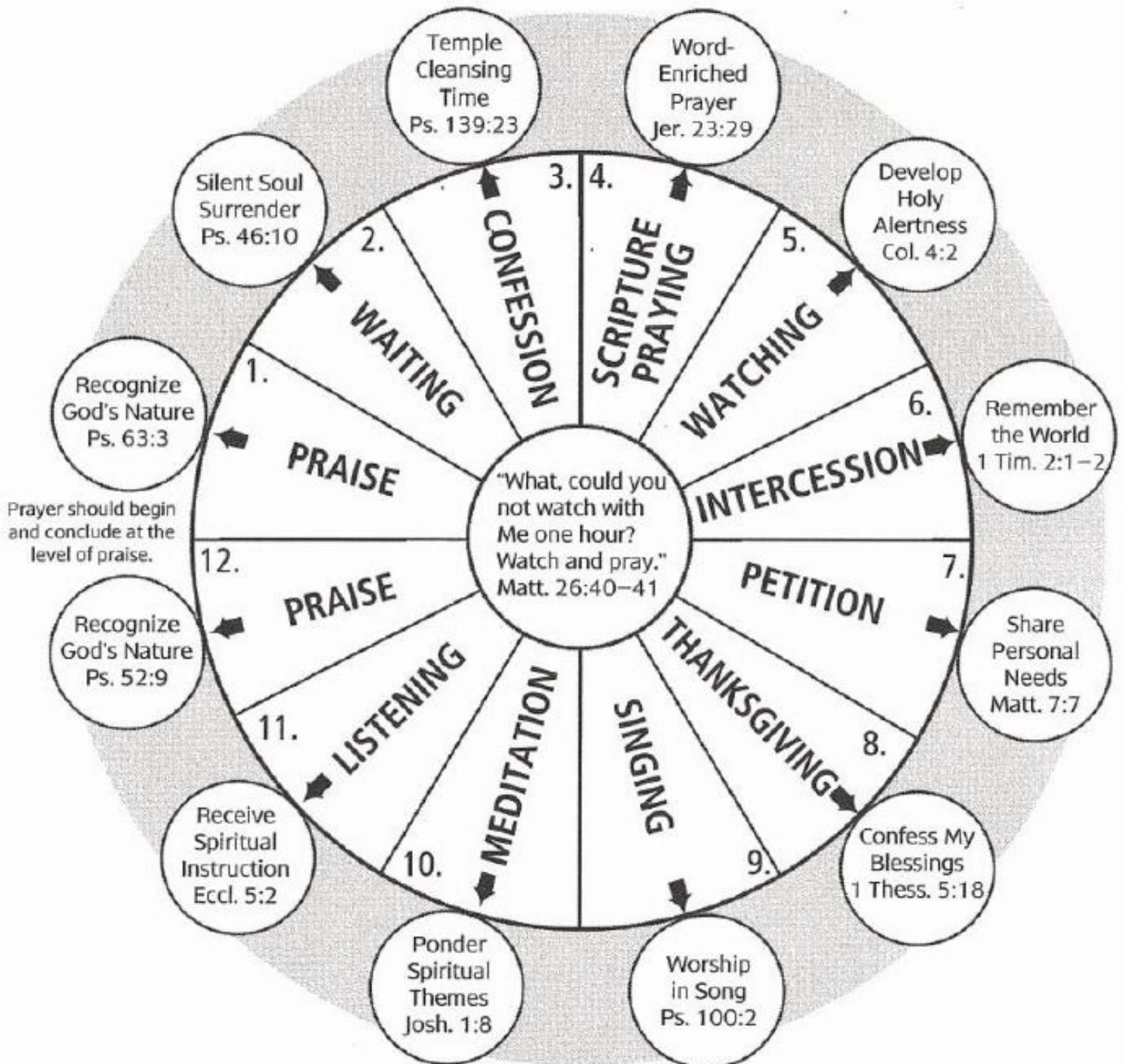
Thanksgiving - This is different from praise. Praise is about WHO God is. Thanksgiving focuses on what God has done for us. This is a time to confess spiritual blessings, material blessings, physical blessings, past, present and future.

Singing - Ask the Holy Spirit to create "new" melodies within your heart. In Scripture we see songs of praise, songs of power and mercy, songs of thanksgiving, songs of God's name, God's word, and songs of the heart. No one is around to judge you—this is melodic prayer to God and only for him.

Meditation - Ponder something about God, his word, his works. Anything worthy of praise is worthy of meditation.

Listening - A time to ask God questions and wait for the answer as He talks to you about the day to come.





Notes



Spiritual Practice 3 - Savouring Sound

I believe that God gave the gift of music to us because He knew it would be a beautiful meeting place between His heart and ours. Music invites us to slow down, take a deep breath and behold the beauty and dignity of life in every season. God knew that music would unlock our hearts in ways that nothing else could. It can open us to honesty and help us see truth. Music can help us receive beauty in the midst of ashes. Whether our hearts are swept up high on the wings of joy or are surrounded by unseen arms that comfort our most sorrowful moments, music carries the power to inspire and heal us. Hidden amidst the notes, rhythms and lyrics in the unseen place where only the heart can hear, our Creator-Father is always there waiting to be found.

This is your personal invitation into a music-savoring exercise. All that is required of you is to simply receive and enjoy.

Prompt: In your quiet space, take a deep breath. Relax into this moment. Invite the Holy Spirit's presence to come enjoy the music with you. Pray a simple prayer like this: "Holy Spirit, open up my ears and heart. Help me to hear what Your heart is saying through this song."

When you are ready, play the song. Allow the music to wash over your heart and mind. Let yourself continue to relax into what you are hearing. Be present and receptive.

Psalm 23 (Phil Wickham)



When you are finished, write down what you experienced in your journal. As you are writing what you saw and felt, invite the Father to come and speak to you through it. Wait on Him, and then respond to His voice by writing down what He may be wanting to say to you.



Psalm 23

by Phil Wickham

The Lord is my shepherd, there's nothing I need
You lead me to the safest places
You lead me to the safest places
To walk in the meadow and lie by the stream
You meet me in the quiet places
You meet me in the quiet places

Your goodness and Your mercy will follow me
All the days of my life
All the days of my life
And I'll dwell in Your house for eternity
I'll be there by Your side
I'll be there by Your side

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I don't have to fear no evil for I know that You are with me
With oil of blessing, You cover my head
You fill me to overflowing, my cup is overflowing

You prepare a table before me
Right in front of my enemies
You're the shepherd of my soul
You lead me in the right direction
My comfort and my protection
You're the shepherd of my soul

Notes



Spiritual Practice 4 - Prayer Labyrinth

Pilgrimages to Holy Sites have been part of the Christian tradition for millennia. Labyrinths seem to have developed around the twelfth century as a substitute for making a pilgrimage. It's not a maze, there are no dead ends. It's not magical nor a jump start to a deeper spiritual life. It is a slow, quiet, meditative practice.

In walking the labyrinth, with your feet or fingers, you leave behind the noise and hurry of life. Just as you would pack simply for a pilgrimage, you offer your load to Jesus as you begin your prayer journey. The prayer-path structure moves you slowly toward the center and toward God. At times you are close to the center, further along the path you may be farther from the center. This represents the reality of the spiritual journey. But as we keep moving, we are always getting closer to the center and to God, no matter how far away it looks in real space. At the center of the path, you can stop and rest in the presence of God, listening for his word to you. With his word in your heart, you begin your journey back to the world.

To walk the labyrinth:

1. Intentionally leave behind all the noise and haste and clamor of your life. Prepare your heart to listen. God may bring a word of Scripture to your mind. Be patient. Pay attention. How does the journey to the center reflect your current spiritual path?

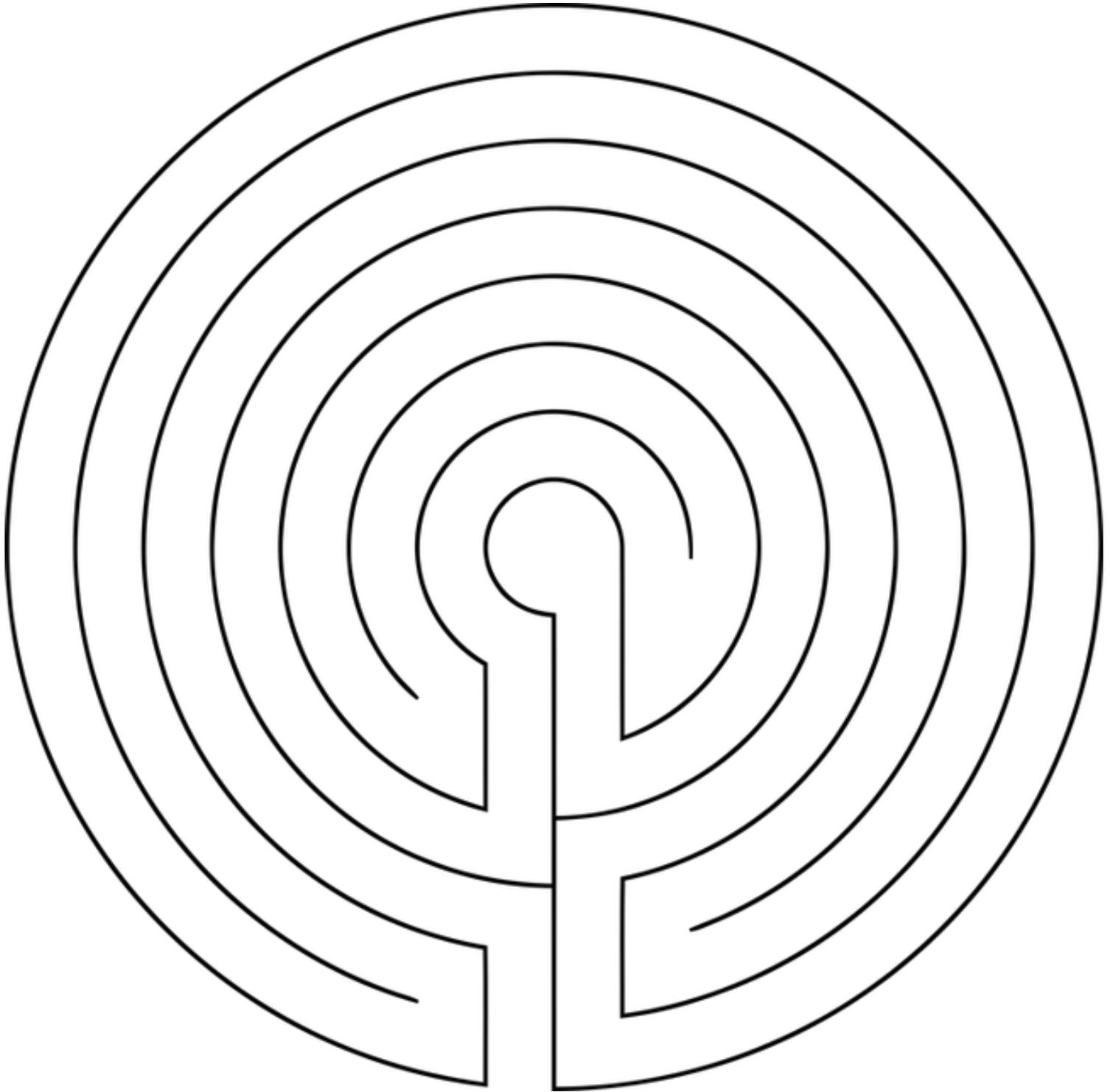
2. As you walk intentionally toward God and the center of the labyrinth consider what you might need to surrender in order to live more fully in the love and fullness of his presence. Is there bitterness, addiction, expectation, pride, self-orientation, past hurts that you want to leave behind as you walk toward God? When you arrive at the center, offer these things to God. Leave them in the center with him.

3. Once in the center, abide in the presence of Christ. Ask for the grace you are seeking for your return to life in the world. Receive the comfort, inspiration or word the Spirit has for you. When you sense that it is time to leave, slowly and with a quiet mind make your way from the center back into the world, listening and stopping as you are prompted by the Spirit. How can you consciously live out of the word God has given you on your prayer walk?

4. When you receive a word from the Lord for your journey, hold onto it. It has been given specifically for you, specifically for now. Don't move away from this word too quickly. Return to it during the week.



Finger Labyrinth



Notes



Spiritual Practice 5 - Confession

Confession is the spiritual discipline that allows us to enter into the grace and mercy of God in such a way that we experience forgiveness and healing for the sins and sorrows of the past. Both forgiveness and healing are involved in confession.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart ... see if there is any offensive way in me” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Seek to confess any known sin to God.

At this point, be quiet before the Lord. Listen.

Did the Lord reveal anything?

If nothing comes to mind, thank Him for His cleansing power.

If the Lord reveals a specific sin:

Write it down.

Confess it.

Repent.

Receive God forgiveness.

With your pen, blot out any sin(s) you wrote on your paper.

On the same paper, write out 1 John 1:9.

Just as you blotted out the sin on your paper, so God blots out your confessed sin with the precious blood of His Son, Jesus. “I-yes, I alone-am the one who blots out your sins ... and will never think of them again” (Isaiah 43:25). He no longer sees your sin!

Praise God for His grace, mercy and forgiveness.



Spiritual Practice 5 - Confession

Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Search me from the inside out,
look deep into the real me, inspect me.

Even though it makes me uneasy
to be examined so closely,

I need You to do it,
to perform the great unveiling.

Expose the excuses I've fallen in love with
and slice them from my life.

Find the darkened corners of my heart
and bring them light.

Uncover the empty places of my soul
and fill them with Yourself.

Hammer my excuses to pieces.

Don't give up until I'm helplessly,
desperately clinging to You again.

Amen.

Taken from 'A Heart Exposed' by Steven James



Notes



Spiritual Practice 6 - Lament

Praying lament is a deeply personal experience. This exercise has been designed to help you connect with your own feelings and experiences so you can freely express them to God. Don't feel like you need to go deep if you're not ready. Remember, honesty is where the real power is with lament, so try not to filter your emotions and words.

Become aware — To start, make yourself comfortable and take a few deep breaths. Become aware of your surroundings, the sounds, the temperature, how your body is today. Open up to God.

Focus on a feeling — Let yourself feel your present emotional state, your difficult situations and griefs and losses. You may have a few in your life. See if you can bring your focus to one of those emotions or situations that you're currently feeling hurt or angry about.

Sit with it — Sit with that feeling, without judging it or telling yourself it's good or bad. Just notice how it feels. Can you locate it in your body? Your gut? Chest? Back? Shoulders? What is it like to hold that within you?

Bring it to God — Now, imagine holding it out in your hands as you stand before him, so you can both see it. Tell God exactly how you feel, without a filter, and allow God to feel what you feel in this moment, to acknowledge the pain and grief that exists. Be raw, honest, and vulnerable. Let God hear all that's in your heart. Remember, you're taking your pain to him, on a quest for deeper intimacy, not rebellion. And know that God can bear it, and that he knows what it's like to hurt. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that God sympathizes with us. Give God consent to sympathize with your lament.



Spiritual Practice 6 - Lament

Express your desires and needs — Plead with God to act, to change what is, to redeem or vindicate or heal or save or fight on your behalf. Wrestle with God if you feel the permission to do so.

Give God your trust — Then, let go. You might want to say, “Even though I feel [insert your emotion or lament], you are good and I trust you with it.” Or “I trust you, help my lack of trust!” Or use the ending to Jesus’s own prayer of lament, “Not my will, but yours be done.”

Be still — For a few minutes, be still before God and allow him to respond. You may feel a lightness or a peace, you may see a picture or hear a word in your mind or imagination, or you might not. Notice how you feel after letting God hear your lament. Whatever happens, allow God the opportunity to meet you in this moment.

Give thanks — Finally, take a moment to thank God for being with you in this space. For listening, and for caring.



Notes



Spiritual Practice 7 - Solitude

Solitude is the practice that calls us to consciously pull away from everything else in our lives, including the company of other people, for the purpose of giving our full and undivided attention to God.

Almost every significant figure in the Bible — from Jacob to Elijah, Moses to Paul — spent time practicing the discipline of solitude. The Gospels frequently mention how Jesus “went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” ([Mark 1:35](#)). In [Luke 6:12](#) he “went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.” Such passages can make us uncomfortable and despairing of our own lack of discipline but with effort, we, too, can practice solitude.

As a time of reflection on this Easter Sunday, take some time to go through these prompts as you take a walk with God.

Ask the Lord what He is cultivating in your heart in this season of your life. Has He planted a seed that will lead to new revelation? Is He opening your eyes to see Him in new ways? Ask the Holy Spirit how you can partner with Him, cultivating growth in your heart and caring for the seed that He has planted.

Ask God to bring to mind a truth He has been revealing to your heart. Where is God inviting you to work out this truth in your life?

Is there anything you're not resting in God's hands right now? Pray about it and ask God for the ability to rest in Him.

Are there areas of distraction that keep you from seeking God fully or hinder your pursuit of Him?

How has the Lord been near and intervening in your life recently?

How are you pressing into God's word? Is His word transforming your thoughts and your actions? Where do you need to press in further?

Are there areas God is calling you to a deeper trust or deeper commitment? Spend some time praising God for who He is, how He has cared for you, and how He'll continue to provide for you.

Take a deep look at your relationship with God. Where are you at with Him?

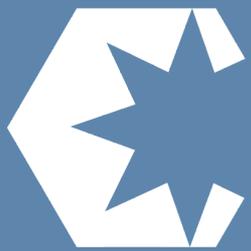
Are you in a time of waiting? Are you wrestling with God about something? Is your faith firmly in Him no matter the outcome?

What is a promise of God that you can draw near to today?



Notes





CANDIDATES
Canada & Bermuda



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