

RECOVERING OUR THIRST FOR GOD | February 8th, 2020

Second Saturday Theme for 2019-2020 ✚ Drawing with Joy from the Wells of Salvation (Is. 12:3)

✚ The unfolding of this year's theme began with the fall topic: *Deepening Over Time*. We studied the lives of Jesus' disciple, Peter, and His mother, Mary. During Peter's 3-year relationship with Jesus, he came to know Jesus and felt he could follow Him, whatever the cost. Jesus had known Peter from the start—what he was capable of; where he fell short. Only after the Resurrection would Peter's longing to follow the Master be fulfilled. Emptied of his assumptions about himself he was ready for a "redemptive encounter" with Jesus. Jesus redeemed Peter's deep, compelling desire to follow after Him and validated the essence of Peter's heart passion, asking, "Do you love me?" At the bottom of all other aspirations, Peter could truly identify the deepest root of his call. His love for Jesus was bedrock and on that basis, Jesus called him to the core of the call: Feed—tend my sheep. Yet, he and all the disciples must wait until the Spirit came upon them, after Jesus had ascended (See Acts 1:4-8; Jn 16:13).

✚ Mary's heart was different. She would bear the Son of God. "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). The Spirit would overshadow her and her son would be called holy—the Son of God (Lk 1:35).

✚ The attached chart represents the necessity of *redemptive encounters* with the Lord—not just once, but whenever we realize He is drawing us to come away with Him. We give Him access to our hearts, as Peter did with Jesus. At our crossroads we find Him, 1) sorting out our inner questions, conflicts, and false perceptions of ourselves and of God, and 2) doing new things through the questions He asks us. We must be willing to be transparent about our lives, within and without. Our new ground will be deeper and more fruitful. On our new ground, we will learn to draw more on the Holy Spirit and His powerful, discerning work. Like Peter, it will mean less of us and more of Him – more love, less focus on our competence (see II Cor. 3:4-6). [Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.]

✚ In January, we contemplated Jesus' redemptive encounter with the woman at the well (Jn 4:9-26). Our theme was *Unblocking the Well*. This woman, the outcast living a life of shame, was spoken to in another light. Having acknowledged her unrighteous life Jesus showed that our back stories don't, in His eyes, determine who we are, or what we can offer the Lord. He spoke the opposite of what her identity was, honoring her—commissioning her to bear holy messages to her community. Her access to the Well was opened as He taught her about his identity and what defined true worship.

✚ Today our theme is "Recovering Our Thirst for God." We consider our "broken cisterns" that leak and hold nothing of God's living water. We explore our "roots" – the inner history of our lives and how we can change what we thirst for. We ask for His redemptive presence in prayer, asking Him to show us where our roots are not drinking of His living waters. We recognize that we too must invite the Holy Spirit, in listening prayer, to speak to us the truth we need in order to replace lies and distortions we've accepted as true.

The testimonies shared this morning illustrate the different ways the Lord works with us: 1) to open us in prayer, inviting more dialogue with Him; 2) to expose distorted attitudes, such as having the wrong image of God, and 3) to realize the great value of being vulnerable before the Lord. In our daily lives we need not fear exposing our struggles and deficits to Him. We recover our thirst, a true thirst, for the living water promised to those who believe in Jesus (Jn 7:37-39). We draw on His saving power and grace. We move on—deepening, and increasingly relying on His Presence within. ☞ Chris Nelson

Three Fields of Growth

Thirsting, Believing, and Asking for More

CURRENT GROUND

Example: ground of Peter's life: reality of self-deception / weaknesses / denial and loss of Jesus Redemptive encounter when he was able to benefit: "Peter, do you love me?"

- Our habits and patterns: healthy and unhealthy
- Outgrowth of the space : God would do new things in and through us
- Thirst for more / need for more
- Acknowledgment of the Lord prompting us to deal with discomfort in our lives

Our asking

God's opportunities

CROSSROADS

Access to our hearts



- A birthing of parts of ourselves
- Reckoning with God
- Unfolding of new vision / assignment
- Drawing more deeply on God
- New patterns replace old habits
- Opening our lives as He asks us to
- Spiritual maturing / equipping

Come have your breakfast, John 21:12

Our Yes

Believe and Trust

NEW GROUND

Flow of our growth in Him

Freer to draw on the Holy Spirit

- Deepened trust in the Lord
- Use of what He's formed in us at the crossroad
- Free of barriers He has removed "Tending" valuable gifts within, brought forth through God's refining
- "Wind" going where He will
- Empowered for His new field of labor
- Our deepening includes the work of discernment that only comes from Him



QUIET REFLECTION

Restoring Our Thirst for God • Jeremiah 12:13; 17:7-8; Matthew 5:6

Second Saturday, February 8, 2020

These questions are meant to help you respond to the teaching and to dialogue with the Lord. Before beginning ask Him to quiet your mind and give you freedom to hear His counsel and share your heart. Pray for guidance in choosing questions that are most relevant to your life and His purposes for you at this time. (Don't try to address every question.)

YOUR PRAYER LIFE

- 1 In what way would you like your prayer life to grow or change? (E.g., to have a stronger desire to pray, or to sense the guidance of the Spirit more clearly, or to be more vulnerable before the Lord, as Paul shared.) Write your answer as a prayer request to the Lord.

- 2 Jayne shared about the barriers she once had to listening for the Lord's voice.
 - ~ Do you have similar barriers that you would like the Lord to remove?
 - ~ Or, are you growing in this area, wanting the Lord to increase your ability to hear Him?

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- 3 Chris shared about "redemptive encounters" such as Peter's conversation with Jesus on the lake shore and with the woman at the well. Ask God to speak to you today about whatever is on His heart for you. (Let it become a dialogue if there are things you want to ask of Him.)

The Creativity of the Holy Spirit

Quiet reflection—also called journaling, is meant to extend beyond processing of feelings and thoughts. One of its main values is in giving God time to speak to us! For example:

☞ Listen

Is He asking questions of you?
Is He providing much needed counsel—His interpretation of your inner thoughts?

☞ Dialogue

Conversation with the Lord brings much understanding and draws us closer to Him.
~ Invite Him to speak to you. Wait in the quiet. Respond. Wait again, etc.
~ Write a letter, poem or psalm to express your heart.

☞ Images that Speak

~ Draw a picture or symbol of what is on your heart.
~ Ask Him for an image that depicts how He sees you or something you're concerned about at this time.

☞ Editing Your Story

Ask Him to bring to light any assumptions or perceptions embedded in your heart and story that are not true. What is true that He would write in place of what is written there?

☞ Quiet

Invite the Lord to minister to you in the quiet. Whether with words or in the simple awareness that He is present with you, let Him "restore your soul" in whatever way you need. • You may want to journal and reflect on this time later.

- 4 Consider Diane's story about her distorted image of God. Did you identify with what she shared? Either now, or later when you have more time, ask the Lord to show you if your image of God is a true one. If it is not, pray that, 1) He would help you name or describe how you see Him, or 2) ask Him to open you to His process of replacing the false image with a true one. (Sometimes it's helpful to write a letter to the Lord, expressing all that you think and feel about some area of your life. Consider doing that in your personal prayer time about this issue of seeing and relating to God as He really is.)

YOUR WALK WITH GOD

- 5 In the message shared today many significant concepts were touched on, some that require deeper reflection. Of these three, does one stand out as something you need to process with the Lord? If so, use this time to invite Him into this area of your life. Now, or when you're in prayer at home, take time to listen to what He wants to say to you.
- ▣ What stood out to you as something the Lord wanted to teach or train you in?
 - ▣ Did He identify a "broken cistern" that is keeping you from Him, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13)?
 - ▣ Does God have more for you—a greater claim on your life that calls for a heart like David's. And when he had removed [Saul], he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will' (Acts 13:22).]



SECOND SATURDAY

February 8, 2020

All Things New Prayer Ministry

Part of every month at Second Saturday is our 45 minutes in “the quiet.” When we began our ministry in 1995 we had in mind the mothers of small children who had trouble fitting in a quality prayer time. We wanted to provide at least one Saturday morning each month when they could be assured of uninterrupted time to pray and wait on the Lord. We would end the morning praying for one another, and many of us learned alongside other women how to observe those moments of listening for what was on God’s heart before we ourselves prayed. We are so grateful for the men and women of all ages who have been with us for many years! We are blessed to share some of what we’ve learned with all who are here from Hope Church today!

OUR STORIES – SECOND SATURDAY TEAM

By Jayne Taylor

Colossians 4:2 ▪ Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

In bounded my neighbor with a book “you’ll just love this book” on listening prayer. Hmm. Immediately I thought that He must think my prayer life is weak—needs something—that I need another way to pray and this is the better way. I smiled. I thought to myself, yup here’s another method to try to be better, more spiritual. I thanked him but I felt an undercurrent of threat.

But that’s how I saw my life. Someone might think less of me. Not like me, value or approve of me. After all I work hard. I pray hard. I execute my walk with God with discipline. And I taught Bible studies. I taught Sunday school. I read devotionals—classic ones, and I prayed—a lot, I think. Mostly like this, with the well-known acronym: ACTS

- A. Adoration: adored and worshipped God maybe even with music
- C. Confession: I confessed often and knew I needed to
- T. Thankfulness: I was thankful ... mostly
- S. Supplication: I was really good at asking for things and constructing requests

This was a model of prayer known to help the believers. And I was a dedicated one. But was there more to know? To understand?

This book, about listening prayer, was not what I had ever thought about or considered. Listening to what? To whom? and when? What is the context? Is this some new age thing entering our churches? Probably. I left it on the table.

Months later I went to a gathering of women interested in deepening their prayer lives and quenching their thirst for knowing and understanding and communicating with God. Perhaps 30 of us gathered one night at a church in the social events room to hear a little presentation. Long now forgotten is the teaching but what happened next is not.

“I want you to gather and sit in small groups of three with people you do not know and pray for each other. Please do not request prayer. I want you to be still and quiet and listen. Agree who will be first, second and third to receive prayer.”

Yikes! Wait a minute, Sit with strangers and guess what you are to pray for? Out of my comfort zone. But I was there, and I had to trust the winsome, loving presenter. So we sat together with nervous smiles. The person on my right received prayer first. It was still. It was quiet. We waited. Eyes closed.

Soon a thought, a nudge came into my brain. Pray about her anxiety—marriage—and something else. I waited. Then with some courage I prayed what had occurred in my mind. The next woman prayed for her. When we were finished the receiver spoke with amazement. “That is exactly what I needed in prayer. How did you know?”

That was my initiation into the world of the Holy Spirit moving, discerning and working within me to utter prayers not even requested or known. I marveled. I praised God my redeemer. God did nudge, gave me an impression on a need—me stumbling along. I had done nothing. There was no formula. I wasn’t more devoted or earnest.

Though perhaps I was obedient to take the risk. The risk of making a fool of myself and offering a prayer boldly...not knowing if it would be right, received or offend. I knew not what this nudging prayer would do. I have to say that questions came to me in the quiet of waiting. What does “Paula” need in prayer, O Lord? What is her heart’s cry?

Later I would ask myself: Where—when have I known silence and listening to God speak? Aha! The Bible, of course. It is there as a model but it never ever dawned on me that in MY lifetime this same waiting, listening, asking questions kind of praying could BE could exist in my life.

Moses came to mind...In Exodus 4 God has spoken to Moses to go and rescue HIS people from the land of Egypt. Moses replies, “Nope. Not me. They won’t listen. I am not a good

speaker. I have never been and am not now. EVEN after you have spoken to me I am clumsy with words.” The Lord replies, “Who makes mouths?” The dialogue continues. Israelites eventually are miraculously delivered from Egypt.

There is Job and Jacob, Daniel and Joseph. There’s Samuel asking Eli if He called him. “In those days messages from the Lord were very rare and visions were quite uncommon.” God speaks to Samuel but he did not recognize the voice of God. Eli trains Samuel to hear the voice of God.

In Jeremiah 33:3 it says “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.”

There’s Jesus asking Saul on the way to Damascus why he is persecuting him with Saul asking, who are you? There is Jesus speaking to Ananias in a vision to go to the house of Judas where Saul is praying and lay hands on him so he can see again. Ananias protests “he’s authorized by the leading priests to arrest every believer in Damascus.”

But Jesus says, “Go and do what I say... for Saul is my chosen instrument.” Ananias goes and lays hands on him. “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road has sent me so that you may get your sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

But I had not noticed our Holy Triune God actually interacting with the created in fascinating ways. There it was... in plain sight. Thus began an adventure in listening and praying and the healing of my soul along with it. It went something like this:

Sit still. Be quiet. Wait. There is an adventure before you as you grasp this wonder and alertness of hearing ME.... Hearing from ME, creating in you a way to pray, to receive, to hear, to ask a question of ME, to listen for an answer and trust ME in the process.

But I was one who felt threatened and insecure as I went through life. How could that be? You mean I don’t have to DO anything to get something? I had not experienced unconditional love ... not from my background. I was unsure if God loved me. I lived my good Christian Life with undercurrents of jealousy, envy and competition, receiving my identity from what others thought and said and reflected back to me.

You mean you are saying that Jesus is going to interact with me like He did with Saul and Ananias? Moses and Samuel? This newness of this quieting prayer overwhelmed me. You mean I did not need to BE someone else to encounter God? He loved me and valued me ? Yikes! As I am? More yikes.

But it was true after all. The old false self began to disappear and a new true loved-unconditionally-by-God self became the real me.

Over these years with gatherings much as we are doing this morning I have learned to listen, to pray, and to RECEIVE prayer from those who listen and who courageously and lovingly transmitted to me Christ’s healing words for my life.

And this way—a way for prayer that continues to bring refreshment to my soul, that quenches a thirst for the reality of God, has made a difference and I am extremely grateful.

Here are a few things I understand now:

- ~ I can come to God in prayer without an agenda or wish list. God in HIS mercy can tell me what I need to pray for rather than me telling God what HE needs to hear.
- ~ I continue to learn to take my time with God. Time with the dear Lord can last minutes rather than seconds and hours rather than minutes.
- ~ Our Holy God does reveal to other people how to pray for me just as He reveals to me what to pray for them.
- ~ God has given each of us different giftings in prayer, in the body of Christ.
- ~ God, through the use of the Holy imagination can give us Scriptures to pray pictures and images to speak of and prayers to utter.
- ~ There is a vitality in praying instead of an oughtness and drudgery.
- ~ And GOD really does love me after all. And in that understanding of self-acceptance I no longer have to perform for God and work hard for God and do more and more and more.

The simplicity of being in the quiet with the Lord manifests itself in my seemingly hum drum daily life. It’s quite something!

Jesus Loves Me, This I Know by Diane Paulson

I grew up going to church and Sunday School every week singing Jesus Loves Me This I Know, but I didn’t really know Jesus loved me. I knew it in my head, but not in my heart. I was the youngest of four kids born within 6 ½ years and raised on a farm by a mom and dad that loved me, but I didn’t know my dad loved me. Instead of seeing my dad’s hard work and sacrifices as love, I took in the message that I should work harder, there was always more to do, and that

what I did wasn't good enough. The message I "heard" from my dad, I transferred to my Heavenly Father.

As a teenager, I totally gave my life to the Lord, but for many years I had a distorted view of God. I worked hard to have regular quiet times, read the Bible, pray, and serve Him faithfully through my jobs and outreaches. However, I always felt I should be working harder, there was a long list of things I never got done, and what I did get done, was inferior to others.

When I became a mom about thirty years ago, I started having deeper friendships with women that always talked about how good the Lord was. Again, I could say that with my head, but I didn't feel it in my heart. I identified most with the man with one talent in Matthew 25, feeling inferior and afraid like the Lord was a "mean taskmaster"- hard to please. In a prayer appointment with two women from All Things New, I told them I knew this distorted view of God and myself was wrong, but that was my inner dialogue. The 90-minute appointment was like having open heart surgery. I poured out years of frustration, fatigue and failure to really love God and myself. They listened with such love and understanding, and the LORD removed the lies and poured in truth as to who He was, and I was! The Lord used this appointment and the movie, The Passion to help me see and experience the great love of the Lord and of my dad. My eyes were opened to see all the hard work on the farm was because of my dad's great love for me and our family. My eyes were also opened to see the love of God and Jesus through the death on the cross for me.

I praise God that I can sing Jesus Loves Me This I KNOW and know it in my head and in my heart! Knowing His love and His delight in me has been key to wanting to spend time trying to hear His voice and developing it as a lifestyle through the ups and downs of life. Here are a few things I'm learning in this journey of listening prayer:

~ Although I love to spend time in the Word and with the Lord trying to hear His voice, it takes discipline and time to really get quiet and shut out the distractions and the zillions of other good things that want my attention. It takes time and practice to truly drink from the "wells of salvation" and to choose the better portion of trying to hear what He is saying.

~ It's helpful to develop friendships and prayer partners with others who also are trying to hear what the Lord is saying. The Lord uses our struggles and

vulnerability to help us and teach us to love one another and ourselves.

~ When difficult things come, it's helpful to pour out our hearts to the Lord asking Him for His perspective. He often speaks through a scripture, song, picture, friend, or nature. He knows our language and it's helpful to write down what He shows us for further reference.

~ He often just gives us one direction at a time asking us to trust in Him and lean not onto our own understanding. Often times things don't make sense.

~ "God His own does tend and nourish us." Look for ways He is encouraging you and ask Him to help you and encourage you! Jesus loves you and me, THIS I KNOW.

By Paul Currie

Being vulnerable is the most difficult part of my life. And being vulnerable is the most meaningful part of my life.

I am the eldest son in a preacher's family. My entire life has been shaped by the Bible, the church and living in a Christian family. Much of that shaping created great wounds in me because of the manipulating of Scripture and faith I experienced, and the abusive parenting my wounded parents provided, particularly my dad.

I learned early to trust no one but myself. I crafted a hard, impermeable shell around me and did whatever it took to get what I thought I needed and I wanted to make life work. I tried to be invulnerable to the best of my abilities. I believed that the face of God looked exactly like my dad's face.

God's love-filled grace through the redemptive, sacrificial love of Christ and the presence of the Spirit within me have changed that over a long journey, a long process that continues and will continue until I am in my true Father's presence. I no longer see my dad's face between me and my Lord. But I still struggle to love God for who he is and not only for what he does for me. I still struggle to trust him, to be vulnerable before him.

It feels much safer to focus on studying about God, believing in his attributes, in my understanding about God. It feels risky to truly love God for who he is, to delight in him, not only for what he does for me, the blessings, his gifts.

Without vulnerability there is no true, deep relationship. Without vulnerability, completely open to the Lord, he cannot nurture me and I cannot truly love him more than anything or anyone else. And yet I lose nothing with this vulnerability: He doesn't seek to take anything or anyone—any good—away from me. In fact, he only makes those good gifts mature fully in my life when I place them, with open hands, in his hands for his will to be done.

Process; it takes time to break old habits of living, thinking and believing, and let the Lord's will be done in my life. My will must be to have his will have its way with me. And prayer is God's love language with me to do this. Listening to him, taking the time in silence to open my heart before him, to hear what he has to say—not just petitioning him for what I need, but deep quiet before him, to bask in his presence and relate with him.

I struggle to do this; it is difficult to take time and be quiet, to listen. I feel very vulnerable. My Father continues to guide and grow me as his beloved child.

Praise his name for his steadfast love.

The Door of Intercession by Christine Nelson

I was not aware that I was practicing *listening prayer* when I sat in a little closet in my apartment praying for fellow residents. I couldn't read enough books on prayer, especially the more challenging ones by people who received solid guidance from the Holy Spirit (e.g., E.M. Bounds, Oswald Chambers, Agnes Sanford). As I would mention a name and begin to pray I felt I **had** to make room for the prayers of God's Spirit. I can't say why except that I was aware of Him, and when I asked how to pray I would sense not only what the person needed, but also the love and presence of God interceding with me. I continued to let the authors, whose lives I was so aware of, encourage me to hang in there when I didn't quite understand what I was experiencing.

Another incident was life-changing for me, before I began my season of closet intercession. I was a year out of college, living with a friend who, like me, had long been disillusioned with church and faith. She was quite ill at the time and in her desperation decided to try a church recommended by a friend of ours, where they would pray for people to be healed. Of course I went with her as a support. After the service she stayed in the

church for prayer. I walked out into the beauty of an October day enjoying the trees in full color.

In the quietness of that place and moment I heard God say, "I know your name." I knew it was not my voice; it had to be His. Suddenly I felt I belonged somewhere. (At the time, I didn't know I needed to feel that I belonged.)

These two encounters in my early 20's became the basis of what God has called me to. He led me to others who, like me, wanted to grow in hearing from God for the sake of, 1) sharing the joy of it with others, and 2) praying for the deep needs of others in cases where only God *could* know what was behind their pain or lostness. Very often the issue of our identity is at the root of inner turmoil. Over the years I learned how to overcome the deficit of several years in my childhood when my dad was chemically dependent. By the time his life was again productive I had left for college. I realized later on that that parenting gap in my teens meant that I didn't know I was loved or what I was good at. I learned to remember that God knew my name and who I was. I **needed** to belong to Him and to have a Father who would finish bringing me up, which He is still doing! It is always a joy to pray with others on that same path!

And my friend—yes, she was healed. (And she actually became a pastor.)

Listening Prayer by Jack Paulson

Being somewhat of a skeptic by nature, I was very hesitant to invest any significant amount of time in listening prayer. It was fine for other people if they felt like they were hearing from the Lord, but I had no expectation that this was anything that would ever involve me. But reluctantly, with encouragement, I decided to give it a try. At first, about all I could say was, "I've got nothing..." But with practice, I started to notice that a scripture would come to mind, or a worship song, or a sense or an impression that wasn't just out of my own mental process. I always want to confirm anything that I'm sensing with the Word and with others. It's still a process, but I'm learning to trust that the Lord is speaking to me, and I can hear His voice.

All Things New Prayer Ministry

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STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

- 1) Identifying and naming what is false
 - 2) Renouncing (breaking agreement with) wrong ways of operating
 - 3) Repenting of the ways we define ourselves that are not of God
-

COMMON BARRIERS AFFECTING OUR IDENTITY

Messages and Labels

Affect our worth or identity in ways contrary to our God-given identity as beloved children, created to belong, to love, and to serve Him in meaningful ways with the gifts and talents placed in us.

- » Messages and labels influence us in hidden ways:
 - spoken to us by others
 - formed unconsciously through negative experiences or neglect
 - formed through praise or comparisons based on achievements, etc.Examples: I am unlovable ▪ I don't matter ▪ I am stupid ▪ I'm always on the outside ▪ I won't amount to anything ▪ I can't do
- » Labels that limit/disable:
less than ▪ nerd ▪ loser ▪ goody-goody
- » Labels we serve or need to live up to: gifted child ▪ high achiever ▪ good girl

Vows: responses to hurtful messages and experiences

- 1) Influential inward controls about what we will always, or never do or be. They may steer us away from dependence on God to work toward healing in our situation or bind us to our own strategy of avoiding pain and vulnerability instead of placing our faith in the Lord.
- 2) Can serve as helpful boundaries at first, but later become bondages/laws we serve.
- 3) Can actually affect our health and act as "curses" that close us off to His blessings.
Examples ▪ I won't try ▪ I will never trust ▪ I will not grow up ▪ I am responsible for others' well-being ▪ I will never cry ▪ I will always be in control ▪ I will always ...

Roles and Assignments

Within family system – adopt certain ways of functioning:

- » to keep the family intact
- » take on someone else's emotional issues or unsatisfied ambitions to please/placate them
- » adapt ourselves for the sake of others, perhaps to avoid personal conflict, pain or responsibility.
Assignments: e.g., manager ▪ fixer ▪ peace-keeper ▪ scapegoat, etc.

Sins

Where we have denied, buried or been unaware of ways in which we are offending God, failing to respond to His Lordship, or hurting others, we need simply to have this uncovered and dealt with.

BASIC TOOLS FOR REMOVING BARRIERS

1 Discern and Name

- ~ clarify/dialogue over what you are encountering
- ~ name the core message, vow, etc. and identify how it has functioned in or impacted your life

2 Renounce and Replace (The following is for renouncing a message. Adapt this for labels, roles, etc.)

"In Jesus' name I renounce (*use the words of the message*). I break my agreement to operate according to this *message, etc.* (More detailed prayer may follow.)

Ask the Lord to speak His true message that replaces the false one. Wait on Him; He will most often give that new message to you if you are praying about this, or to the person you are praying with. Pray simply to replace the old message with what the Lord has spoken to you. (More detailed prayer may follow.)

3 Breaking a Vow

Where a vow is being broken, use the same format. Repent of any awareness of how you've chosen to be governed by this vow—taken matters into your own hands, taking a path other than faith in the Lord.

4 Repent and Release

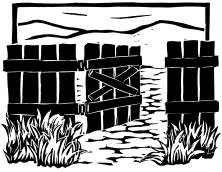
In the context of these prayers, forgiveness is often needed for another, or for your own sin. If you have not already done so:

- 1) repent for your part in embracing a lie, failing to trust or respond to His Lordship,
- 2) repent for other consequences related to what you are dealing with
- 3) forgive others / or ask Him for forgiveness
- 4) release the person (or yourself) from judgment. God only can judge.

5 Affirmation and Blessing

In these prayers, we ask God to "bring His healing word" at any level or juncture along the way. This simply means that He knows what message or affirmation is needed to close the wounds we have brought to Him.

After praying through, to break any of these barriers, ask for His words of blessing over the person and their new path, opened through this time. If that person is you, ask the Lord to bless you in the area you have just processed with Him.



LISTENING PRAYER

GATEWAY TO GOD'S HEART

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY HEART

In our dialogue with God trust grows. He knows and understands us. Being listened to by Him is a gift! We accept that He wants to speak to us personally. When our dialogue is about the health of our soul, we can trust that He can build into our souls these foundational truths: **I am a loved one, created by God. He knows me. God is for me!**

As we know, in our subconscious the responses to what we experience in daily life shape how we define ourselves. How we interpret what's communicated to us about ourselves, spoken or unspoken, becomes part of our self-image. When we live with damaged emotions and false definitions of ourselves we see life through a filter and we don't function as God meant us to. There is a false self and a true self. Only our Maker can restore our souls to the original person He created.

If we recognize that we need help there are many good resources available: good therapists, counseling pastors and church focus groups, and many written resources. But the practice of maintaining our souls on a daily basis can be more significant than we realize. We make room through our dialogue with the Lord for His truth to sort out what we cannot see ourselves.

The Holy Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Cor.2:10). He searches our hearts and intercedes for us according to God's will (Rns 8:26-27).

Jesus, our Redeemer, has shown us how to maintain our outward lives through Word, Sacrament, worship, repentance, thanksgiving, and dependence on His life within us. He has redeemed our inner life as well—the root system of our history, using these same provisions.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

It takes time to notice, in the light of His Presence, what we are carrying, and what is beneath the surface that God wants you to notice, or name. What is fueling the painful things we struggle with?

God has searched me and knows me" (139:1; 7-13). I cannot get away from His Spirit, even my inmost being is known to Him who made me.

Inviting Him In ▪ "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Rev. 3:20).

Just as we are, and in the context of how we pray and what we need, we ask Jesus to meet with us. At mealtimes with people we trust, our guard is down. This is the fellowship He offers – a dialogue where we don't need to fear judgment. He receives us and the conditions of our lives—hopeful or

difficult, with grace. Our questions invite Him to go to deeper areas of our souls—to the details, like the inner workings of a finely crafted clock. It is a way of trust, of gradual revelation at a pace we can handle.

Identity Questions about our identity lead to the basic question of who has had authority to shape us—the right to speak into our soul, to tell us who we are? This helps us sort out before the Lord the various defining messages we've internalized. We learn to ask whether another's comments and perceptions are trustworthy, to be received and applied, or laid aside. In this sorting process, we learn who we are not – what is not true about us, which frees us to operate only out of what is true according to the Lord.

Identity questions address evaluations and attitudes about myself and my potential to mature as *myself*. He will bring up, out of the sub-conscious, these shaping communications: messages, labels, roles, assignments, inner vows and directives. Your questions before God will be very basic:

- Is this message true? Is this role I have been playing in my family, or other social system true to who I am? How has it defined my life? Is this label or role I've accepted pleasing to God, drawing me to be my highest self before Him?
- Has the decision (vow) I made to never do this, or always do that—the setting of my will in this way, helped me walk by faith? In what way is it a barrier to honoring God's will for me? Am I following the directive or script of someone else rather than God's living path?

Law vs Grace He will show us how to access the redemption of the Cross where we are conforming unconsciously to a variety of laws, assigned by others or ourselves. We ask for His light, to uncover self-made rules, judgments, and self-blame related to our attempts to atone for real or imagined errors. He will help us *name* those laws and receive forgiveness and grace.



True or False? Let God begin to "diagnose" the condition of our soul by simply exploring what is and is not TRUE. It may relate to our self-image or our image of God. Knowing what is there will not in itself heal us. But we have basis on which to receive God's healing words and open a process of restoration in your heart. Let God begin to diagnose the condition of your soul by simply exploring what is and is not TRUE from His point of view.

Neglect, abuse, lack of adequate nurture of any kind, raises an important foundational question: Does it line up with the truth about my life, fruitfulness, honor, sacredness—my value in God's eyes?

We exchange the objective truth of God's for human messages. We're ask God to replace false ways—perceptions about ourselves we've agreed to. We then stand WITH GOD over our wounded or damaged souls, giving Him access to cleanse, comfort, repair, and reconstruct.

On the next page is a fuller explanation of these inner dynamics. Included are prayers you can pray by yourself or with someone you trust.

GROWING IN PRAYER

Learning to Listen Well



Hearing from God is a training school led by the Holy Spirit. We learn to know the heart and language of the Lord, and to understand that He doesn't speak to everyone in the exact same way. He is building a deeper relationship with us individually through different phases of this training. One phase is listening for and discerning the voice of our Lord.

We may be learning or growing in the ability to:

- 1) hear in the context of our own lives, needs and relationships.
- 2) hear for someone we may not even know. We would understand that God has prompted us and will show us what to pray as we wait on Him.
- 3) hear on behalf of one another in a group. We listen together, and we listen specifically as we pray for each one. We learn to wait a moment before we launch in, honoring the Lord by making room for Him to tell us what is on His heart for our sister or brother.

Taught by the Spirit of Truth

John 14:24-26

Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

What we learn through the Holy Spirit comes through what He himself hears from the Father. We can, in turn, ask Him what we need to learn.

—ASK

- 1) that the Holy Spirit would teach you to pray.
- 2) that He would give you understanding of scriptures about the Spirit and prayer that perplex you.
- 3) that He would help you trust His leading in areas of prayer where you need to grow and deepen.

—IN RELATIONSHIP

- 1) God with us: When we bring a new baby home from the hospital we may initially rely on the good advice of others in caring for it. We quickly realize this little one is unique. In a way, its personality will shape how we parent, combining good practices with flexibility based on how they're wired and what they seem to need from us. This also applies to God's training of us.
- 2) We with God: David is a good model of one who knew God. He knew God's heart. He was a man after God's heart and would do all God's will (Acts 13:22). He knew that God knew him through and through (Ps. 139:1-18). We get to know the heart and

purposes of another by listening carefully to what they entrust to us because we really care. Because we really care to know God's ways we will ask for and listen intently for His leading and purposes.

Unique Journey ✦ Wisdom in the Process

Isaiah 55:2-3b ✦ Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live....

Jeremiah 2:13 ✦ ... for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Why would we prefer things that don't satisfy? What is there about listening to God that satisfies the yearnings of the soul?

There is a spectrum of attitudes about hearing His voice. There are those who feel it is presumptuous, perhaps even dangerous, to think God would speak to us. There are many for whom the norm is to hear from Him daily in great and small things. They would say, "Why wouldn't you expect God to talk to you?" Many of us are satisfied as we are. We may need to ask God to awaken us to this good gift He has for us.

Why not ask?

Need: The health of our soul can depend greatly on how we approach our heavenly Father. Who else can truly affirm our worth? Who knows and cares about us more than the Lord? No matter how well we are handling things we may not be in touch with our core needs and desires. We may have thirsts related to our deficits in love and nurture. Or, we may simply be missing the richness of relationship with God and not realize it. We can simply ask that He would draw us back to Himself and give us a thirst for His love – His fountain of living water.

Barriers to Trusting His Voice: The need for caution in assuming we have heard from the Lord is real. That is why we are led on a personal path. "Is it my own voice?" we wonder. God's training includes distinguishing between what we want to hear and the ability to clearly identify His voice and message. He will help and train us to identify our thoughts and desires. We can rely on His help!

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

We can test what we are hearing against the truths of Scripture by asking Him:

- 1) Please confirm that this is from You.
- 2) Is this meant for me to know and to pray about, or am I also to share this with someone?
- 3) Is this for now, or sometime in the future?



His word to us can also be a prompt that He wants to speak to us about something more weighty. "Take time to sit with it and with Me. I will show you what you need to understand."

Asking – Seeking – Knocking

Jesus' teaching from Luke 11:9-10 is key in listening prayer. Our asking opens the way for the Lord to respond. Below are examples of basic questions.

FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS

These are extremely basic and can be part of our prayer time, or any time. The point is that when we have asked, we stop and wait for a response. We can easily go on to form our own questions.

1) Lord, what is on your heart about this person, situation, task, problem, me? We go beyond what we see and understand to the purposes of Jesus that spring from His deep, caring heart. Knowing God's heart purposes shows how to act or speak effectively, our efforts focused in the right direction.

2) Lord, what do you have for me in this situation, this day, this assignment, etc? This opens the door for God to deepen your understanding. You are willing to hear beyond your immediate assumptions and to honor His Lordship! It clears the clutter of options and puts us on the same path He is on, serving His purposes, which may prove different than ours.

3) Lord, what is the path of love in this particular moment or relationship? We're inviting Him to pave a way for a healing conversation or act that restores what is broken. His way and timing can guard us from human efforts that make things worse or failing to address the situation.

4) Creative questions; nothing is too basic!! Questions show that our heart is fully engaged—wanting to do His will. We can develop the habit of asking the Lord, even if we think we understand. Our prayer becomes a conversation rather than a monologue. We can build off of such simple questions as: *What is going on? What are You after? What am I supposed to be seeking or asking? Do I have a role here?*

5) The vast realm of dialogue with God! Invite the Counselor, into your world by leaving room for Him to speak. He may have answers to questions that haven't yet occurred to you. In quiet waiting, there is the "still, small voice" speaking to the quieted heart with its capacity to hear and understand.

6) Images and Symbols Ask God to give you a picture of what He wants you to understand. An image functions like Jesus' parables. We see what God is seeing, including symbols that convey the meaning of what we're experiencing. The image stays with us, continuing to unfold God's message over time. Like a puzzle we're working on we may return to an image until we have all the pieces we need. An example would be to ask for an image of yourself in a situation, as God sees you. It may help you understand His role for you, or see how you're being impacted by the situation. You would know how to pray according to His purposes.

To listen to God is to look up to Him with the heart. Through the eyes and ears of the heart we see and hear God – we apprehend the transcendent. The Scriptures graciously invite us to look up and see the invisible. (See Ezek. 44:4; Ezra 8:22; Acts 7:55-56; Luke 1:38).

True listening prayer is obedient listening. To listen to God is to obey Him. Wisdom from above is received by those who are prepared to obey it. To listen in prayer for the voice of the Lord is to find the mind of Christ. • Leanne Payne¹



¹ Listening Prayer by Leanne Payne
A Hamewith Book, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI
Summary of excerpts, Chapter 8, Listening to God, pp. 121-132

FAMILIAR SCRIPTURES THAT CALL US TO DRAW NEAR

Psalms 27:4, 8 • Isaiah 55:1-3a • Song of Songs 2:14
Acts 13:22 • Revelation 3:20 • Psalm 139:1-18

Psalm 139: 1-6

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?



WRITING AS WE PRAY

BENEFITS OF A PRAYER JOURNAL* DRAWING ON THE SPRING OF LIFE



1. Taking time to write out what is going on in our lives and what we think and feel about it is even more valuable when we do it prayerfully.
2. The writing we do can unlock our soul because we must work to express what is real to us.
 - Find the words, the language.
 - Identify the dynamics as they seem to us
 - Open to God the recesses of our soul in detail, including how a situation has affected us
3. Investment of genuine ... communication we owe to our Maker and Redeemer
Rev 3:20: He knocks; we answer the door
Ps.27:8 He says, "seek my face." And like King David we say, "Face Lord do I seek."
4. Processing our inner life IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE
 - This must take us further – to the Word made flesh who dwells in us
 - Decluttered soul | making room for the Spirit / Jesus to occupy / reign / flow – spring up

*We use the term *journal* as opposed to diary or notebook because, by definition, it is more personal: "a record of experiences, ideas, or reflections kept regularly for private use¹". A diary or notebook often includes a record of events, transactions, observations and memoranda. (Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary)

Developing a Journaling Method

Writing in your journal can be completely freestyle and spontaneous. But if you feel the need to establish a pattern, and order the path, here is a simple Bible study method gleaned from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship based on *Lectio Divina**.

1. Exactly what does the text say?
2. What is the interpretation of the text?
3. How does the text apply to my life?
4. What, beyond these considerations, is the Lord saying to me through this text?

Brief explanation of what each step might cover

1. What does the text say:
 - Facts involving people, place, setting or action, any historical facts which impact your understanding of the passage.
 - Statements about God's character or nature.
 - Promises or claims, either conditional or unconditional, to be appropriated.
 - Anything else which strikes you about the facts involved.

2. What is the interpretation of the text?
 - What is the message of the speaker(s)? For example, if Jesus is speaking, what lesson or information is He conveying?
 - What meaning is there in this passage for the people involved in the scene? For example, in reading about Noah you might interpret his actions in light of God's message to his generation.
 - Go beyond the facts to the underlying meaning in the context of the passage and its general application.
3. How does the text apply to your life?
 - Apply the text and truth to your own life. Does it call for a response? Does it call for self-examination? Is there something to lay hold of your life? (For example, reading the Sermon on the Mount moves us to examine our lives according to Jesus' most central teachings.)
 - Internalize and personalize the truths in any way that seems appropriate, asking God for insight.
 - If God speaks to you about something you should do in response, use this time to pray, to yield, etc.
4. What else might the Lord be saying to you through this?
 - During this time, allow the Lord to speak further to you about yourself and about Himself.
 - Wait in silence for several moments, worshipping, listening, allowing time and quiet for the Lord to speak into your heart—to dialogue with you.
 - Write down anything else He brings to mind.
 - We don't always hear something specific from the Lord, and we don't always have words for what we feel.
5. It is good to have the freedom to just BE in God's presence, whether or not we come away with a fresh impression or message. We may simply want to minister to the Lord in worship, just telling Him that we love Him. We may need to wait in His Presence, letting the Holy Spirit wash or fill or renew us in some way.

*"*Lectio Divina*", a Latin term, means "divine reading" and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of *Lectio Divina*. There are various ways of practicing *Lectio Divina* either individually or in groups but Guigo's description remains fundamental.

The Order of Carmelites / www.ocarm.org

SING A NEW SONG



*Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!
Psalm 96:1*

Our dialogue with the Lord, spoken, prayed, sung, or written, is an opportunity for the release of the song of our heart. That deepest heart song gives Him access to us beyond the filters of our thought life. A song rises from the emotional self, a spontaneous expression of how we feel, whether we're joyful, sorrowful, grateful or needing a way to express our deep love for Him.

What characterizes that dialogue?

How often we respond by applying His truths, as we must, but miss or avoid real transparency with Him? Do we know the full value of His Presence in our inner life? Are we familiar with the tender, personal counsel of the Lord that comes with a different meaning: His affection for us.

To sing a new song is to release the wellspring of our heart in response to His love.

HOW DO WE GIVE GOD GREATER ACCESS TO OUR HEART ?

1. RESPONDING TO A FELT NEED | IN TOUCH WITH OUR THIRST

- Ask the Lord to show you what He desires of your love that He does not have?
- Ask yourself what is lacking? What am I not seeing? What exactly does God have for me that I am not thirsty for?
- Do you recognize His invitations to engage more personally with you?
- Ask God to help you experience His love more deeply—to open your receptors to Him.

2. PREPARED GROUND: QUIETED AND RECEPTIVE

Find time with the Lord when you can give Him your full attention, a quieted mind and an open spirit. Pray for receptivity to His voice. Consider scriptures that point to this intimacy with God and pray them as your own. (Ps. 27:8; Song of Songs 2:14)

3. MINISTERING FROM A HEART I KNOW!

The quality of our security in God's love affects how others receive our ministry. God affirmed David as a man "after His own heart" who would do all His will. What value do we put on the fruits of knowing God's heart as it affects our serving? One precious gift of a deepening relationship with the Lord is that we know Him and are known by Him more experientially. His Presence in us is apparent to those we serve and we become more sensitive to what moves God's heart.

Surprised by Love?

Have you ever received a love letter or card expressing affection or affirmation for you? Our God is an emotional, feeling Person. As we form a habit, and built a highway of real dialog in our souls, He will use that way to speak of how He feels toward us. As a parent looks for ways to affirm and bless a child, so our Father longs to "speak tenderly"¹ to us. In some cases, He has waited a long time to convict our hearts—to prepare us to really hear and internalize His "I love you."

To quote a listener, Frances J. Roberts, who has recorded much of God's counsel in her book Come Away My Beloved ², this assurance of God's love is essential to all else. Below is a portion of one message: The Love Covenant.

Service is the salvage of love. It is like the twelve baskets of bread that were left over. The bread that was eaten was like fellowship mutually given; and the excess and overflow was a symbol of service. I do not expect you to give to others until you have first eaten. I will provide you with plentiful supply to give if you first come to receive for your own needs.

This is not selfishness. It is the Law of Life. Can the stalk of corn produce the ear unless first it receive its own life from the parent seed? No more can you produce fruit in your ministry unless you are impregnated with divine life from its source in God Himself. It was from the hands of the Christ that the multitudes received bread. From His hands you also must receive your nurture, the Bread of Life to sustain our health and your life.

This is love covenant with you. It is the message of John 15:4: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me." This abiding is a love relationship, and this is why I said, "Service is the salvage of love."

Service will be futile and burdensome unless it springs from an overflowing heart. Overflowing not with good intentions and condescending self-righteousness, but overflowing with the love of God. This you do not have of yourself, nor can you give, however much you might desire to do so. You shall possess this love only as you wait upon Me, and take time to absorb it from Me, like a quiet flower takes life from the warm rays of the sun.

¹ Hosea 2:14 | ² Published by Barbour Publishing, Inc.,
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