

**W**ALKING WITH THE **S**PIRIT  
*IN EVERY* **S**EASON



**All Things New Prayer Ministry**

March 8, 2025

Joel Warne

© 2015/2025 WellSpring Life Resources





## SCHEDULE



*The tone for the day is of loving listening, noticing, receiving, affirming,  
and finding courage to offer my yes to God's recreating presence.*

<b>8:50</b>	prelude
<b>8:55</b>	worship
<b>9:05</b>	open, reflection, checking in
<b>9:40</b>	the Seasons: <b><i>Cana Good Friday Easter</i></b>
<b>10:25</b>	personal time <i>snacks in Narthex, please observe silence</i>
<b>11:15</b>	group processing
<b>Noon</b>	lunch – fellowship hall
<b>12:40</b>	worship
	the Seasons: <b><i>the 40 Days Ascension Pentecost</i></b>
<b>1:30</b>	personal time
<b>2:30</b>	gathering up the day group processing & communion
<b>3:30</b>	<b>close</b>



## John 12:23,24

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.



the Seasons

**Cana**

**Good Friday**

**Easter**

**the 40 Days**

**Ascension**

**Pentecost**

**I live inside Jesus' story, His story echoes inside mine**

*"In him we live and move and have our being" Acts 17:28*

*"For by him all things were created... and in him all things hold together." Col 1:16a, 17b*

**What season am I experiencing *most right now*?**

The seasons are progressive, but also dynamic. That is, I sometimes pass back and forth between seasons, or experience more than one season at the same time in different areas of life. The gift of each season is union with God and the growth of my true self.

**Am I kicking against my season in any way?**

Sometimes I don't especially like the season I find myself in and I kick against it (Acts 26:14). How can I make peace with this moment of my life? The way forward is to live fully with God and myself in the season I'm in right now.



# Cana

## Good Friday

### Easter

## Cana

*life is good, things are progressing, problems are fixable*

### **Cana wedding** John 2:1-11

*“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” v 11*

### **Cana assumptions**

My deep assumption and longing are that all my desires and activities will be blessed, everything will go well, I'll be loved and celebrated, life will expand and the party will go on. This is natural and beautiful. It only becomes a problem when I require it to be happy.

## Good Friday

*calamity, the death of my former situation, the loss of something centrally precious*

*“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” John 12:24*

### **Good Fridays**

I experience continual Good Fridays. Even things I've associated with God in the past meet their deaths: dreams, relationships, callings, vocations, and more

### **threshold**

My Good Fridays are not a destination, but a threshold into a more profound future.

## Easter

*a new quality of life offered inside my loss*

### **Resuscitation v Resurrection**

### **leaning**

Will I lean backwards into yesterday, sideways into a fantasy life I wish was mine, or forward into a more deeply profound future?



# Personal Time

**What season or seasons on the following pages most speak to me today?**

*Join thoughts, feelings and prayers; create a drawing, a poem or other expression.*



## **Cana** – *personal time*

### ***life is good, things are progressing, problems are fixable***

Cana refers to the seasons of my life when things are looking good, life is expanding, I'm overcoming my problems, and it's not costing me very much.

#### ***John 2:9-11***

*9 And the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." 11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

***How does*** the miracle of the wedding feast in the passage above express what I long for in life, hope for, or expect? What's good about this?

***When might*** my expectations become a problem?

## ***Cana, cont.***

***Who in the passage*** most speaks to right now? What do they say?

- *the bride and groom (hopeful, celebrating, eager for the future)*
- *the master of the banquet (focused on keeping the party going smoothly, nervous about the scarcity of something important)*
- *Jesus (confident that his Father will provide in this moment)*
- *the disciples (good-hearted, just starting to believe)*

***What does my heart long to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in return?***





## Good Friday – *personal time*

***calamity, the death of my former situation, the loss of something centrally precious***

I experience many “*Good Fridays*”— regular losses and deaths I must pass through on my way to new and more profound chapters of life.

***John 12:23,24***

*And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”*

***What loss or death*** (disappointment, trial, frustration, passing away of a former dream or ideal) have I experienced or am I undergoing today? What feelings (bewilderment, anger, grief, uncertainty, unexpected relief) does this stir in me?

***How is Jesus inviting me*** to be with him in my loss? What opportunities for living from my heart with God and myself might this loss offer? What words, feelings, griefs, longings or hopes stir?

## ***Good Friday, cont.***

***To allow my buried seed to grow*** into new life, are there old ways of tending myself that I'm being invited to leave behind? (For example, am I giving space to untrue voices or unhelpful habits of heart and mind that keep me bound to yesterday?)

***Do I notice any new*** habits, attitudes or truths inviting me to lean into them? What risks might be involved? What rewards?

***What does my heart long to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in return?***



## Easter – *personal time*

### ***a new quality of life offered inside my loss***

Like Jesus, in my Easter season a resurrection and new way of being are offered to me too. And I'm faced with a choice: will I receive the new life offered with all its transforming possibilities, or spend my energy trying to get back to Cana?

#### ***John 20:19-20***

**19** *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"* **20** *After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

***What new*** situation does my loss or death (my disappointment, trial, frustration, passing away of something or someone precious) leave me with? What new reality have I been given?

***Is it possible*** that a new quality or depth of life is being offered inside my changed situation? Do these new possibilities meet resistance by a part of me that wants to go back to Cana, or disappear into a fantasy life I would prefer to live in?

***Easter, cont.***

***What feels exciting in all this? What feels scary? What risks are called for?***

***What does my heart long to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in return?***

*Walking with the Spirit  
in Every Season*



session 2

**the 40 Days**

**Ascension**

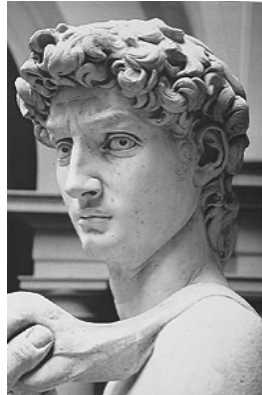
**Pentecost**



## The 40 Days

*mourning my losses; letting God befriend me as I adjust to my new situation*

### *The David*



### *The Prisoners*

#### **2 Corinthians 12:8-9**

**8** *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.*  
**9** *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*



## The 40 Days continued...

### **feel and mourn our losses**

If I don't mourn I might despair. Bitterness is loss that has not yet been mourned.

*"At first it's not about feeling better, it's about feeling everything."*

### **let God befriend me in my loss as I adjust to my new situation**

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught... Come and have breakfast." John 21:9,10,12b

Let God be my doula

Become my own doula

*I am God's primary incarnation of love to me*

*"Do not perpetuate violence against the part of yourself that needs to be loved the most."* James Finley

### **mourning & befriending**

are central to my ability to stop clinging

### **stay present for my birth**

Notice new life when it stirs, attend it; find courage to ease into it a bit at a time.

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John...feed my lambs." John 21:15*

The Doula is eternally patient, but always woos the one in labor toward birth.





## **Ascension**

*releasing my losses, letting them “ascend” with Jesus to the Father*

### **release**

I must ultimately embrace a posture of release or I can get stuck in a hamster wheel existence—where I spin and spin and spin in my own unresolved hurts, disappointments, unfulfilled longings and regrets.

*<sup>51</sup>While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup>And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.” Luke 24:51-53*

### **If I release what I’ve come to depend on, won’t I be left empty, alone, without support?**

*“Behold, I am with you always!” Matthew 28:20*

### **My losses make space in me**

to embody Jesus’ presence if I can make peace with them.



## **Pentecost**

*a growing fullness of spirit, living my real life as my true self*

### **Galatians 2:20a**

*I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...*

### **2 Cor 3:17**

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom...*

### **2 Corinthians 3:18**

*[I am] being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

### **Teresa of Avila**

*“When one reaches the highest level of human maturity, one has only one question left: ‘How can I be helpful?’”*

*What nourishes others? What makes room for life to grow? What posture holds others close and protects even while sometimes challenging them? What encourages others forward during their labor pains?*

### **a doula for others**

The spirit of Pentecost yearns to bless and accompany others as a doula to new life being born in them.



## The 40 Days – *personal time*

### ***mourning my losses; letting God befriend me as I adjust to my new situation***

Like the disciples, my 40 Days is the season during which I'm called to mourn my losses, stop clinging to a past that has died, or to a fantasy life I would prefer to live, in and instead be with God in the real life that my death and resurrection are offering.

**Scripture** - 2nd Corinthians 4:8-10,16,17

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body... 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer self is decaying, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...*

***Do I feel ready*** to stop clinging to my preferences, fantasies and wish-dreams and instead live the real life God is offering me? What feels attractive about this? Is there anything I resist?

***Am I ready to feel and mourn*** the losses and deaths I have experienced and let God be with me in my mourning?

***The 40 Days*** cont.

***As Jesus fed and warmed*** his disciples during their 40 Days, am I ready to let Jesus befriend and comfort me? Will I extend patient love and compassion to myself while slowly embracing the new thing God is doing? How will I become a Doula to myself and the new life being born in me?

***What does my heart long to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in response?***



## **Ascension** – *personal time*

### ***releasing the old, letting it “ascend” with Jesus to the Father***

This season represents my readiness to release a past with its sometimes painful events and tightly held needs or demands, letting them “ascend” into the care of Jesus and my Father in heaven.

#### **Scripture - Luke 24:50-53**

*<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

***I will never again*** be as I was before my Good Friday experience (my disappointment, pain, loss, or former life). I have been given a new situation. God is offering my spirit a fullness of life fitted to my new reality.

*Am I ready to release former things into Jesus’ care, letting them ascend with him to God? Am I ready to open myself to the blessing that this release wants to impart to me?*

***What permissions*** might I need to offer God to give God room to help me release the past? ***What practical actions*** might help me release hurts, regrets or unfulfilled longings into God’s care?

***Ascension*** cont.

***What seems inviting*** about releasing my life and needs into Jesus' care right now? What feels risky?

***What does my heart yearn to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in response?***



## **Pentecost** – *personal time*

*a growing fullness of spirit, living my real life as my true self*

As I say yes to Jesus' seasons within me, I experience a growing wellbeing in my life as it is. I increasingly live the life I've been given as my true self in Christ. A growing sense of wellbeing in my life stirs an urge to bless others.

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me... Galatians 2:20a*

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom... 2 Cor 3:17*

*[I am] being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*"When one reaches the highest level of human maturity, one has only one question left: 'How can I be helpful?'" Teresa of Avila*

**God is growing a fullness** of life in my spirit that helps me live life as my true self.

*Am I ready to shift my weight into God's growing fullness within, putting less weight down in my incompleteness, lacks, gaps or unanswered questions? What feels inviting about this?*

**The true me gains courage** and expands with God's expanding fullness inside. How does my true self—the deepest me, the part of me that feels like home, the part that lasts throughout eternity with God—yearn to become my home-base right now?

*What would I like to say to God about this?*

*What is God's word to me in response?*

***Pentecost*** cont.

***What urge to bless others*** do I notice growing in me? Is there any way I'd like to be a doula to the new life laboring to be born in some other person or group God has given me? (Spend a little time with Jesus regarding any ways you are ready to extend blessing to others together.)

***What would my heart like to say to God about this?***

***What is God's word to me in response?***





## My Letter from God

*What are God's thoughts and feelings of care and invitation toward me in the season I find myself? If I could sit down for a few minutes and hear God's heart toward me today, what would God long to tell me?*

### **Write a letter from God — to you**

*Fully write God's loving heart toward you in all you are experiencing in this season—all you suffer, enjoy and long for.*

*If you've never done something like this before, just imagine as well as you can what God would love to say to the hopes and longings of your heart—and **write it down as God speaking directly to you!***





## Prayers for All Seasons

Visit the prayers below throughout all the seasons of your soul. Let the prayers find a deeper and deeper place in you.

### **loving myself during this season**

*God, I release myself to live as an imperfect person under your blessing during this season. I allow my daily faults and weaknesses to relax in complete safety beneath your compassionate gaze and my compassionate gaze. Because your son Jesus has left all judgment to you, dear Father, I refuse to act as a judge to myself, or hold back approval, or only give affection to myself when certain conditions are met. I will intentionally look for, point out and celebrate your presence and qualities in me. I will honor them by giving them room to grow. I fully receive your affection, Lord, as you delight in me as your beautifully made child, while you transform me more and more each day from glory to glory in you!*

### **loving others during their seasons**

*God, I release \_\_\_\_\_ to live as an imperfect person under your blessing, and under my blessing during this season. I allow their weaknesses and faults to rest in complete safety beneath your compassionate gaze and my compassionate gaze. Because your son Jesus has left all judgment to you, dear Father, I refuse to act as a judge, or hold back approval, or only give affection when certain conditions are met. More than that, I choose to look for, point out, and celebrate your presence and qualities in my loved one, and to honor them by giving them room to grow. I rejoice in \_\_\_\_\_ as your beautifully made child, while you transform this beloved person more and more each day from glory to glory in you!*

*In Jesus' name, amen.*



- ACTIVITY -

## Doula – A Daily Practice

**Self-criticism, self-blame and self-censoring quash my true self in Christ.**

What words and habits will I adopt to replace self-shaming with loving myself in the way God loves me while my true self is being born deeply inside?

A doula is an encouraging companion during a mom's labor. The doula is not a medical expert but someone who surrounds the mom with love, encouragement and warmth. The presence of a doula has been shown to aid and comfort the birth process.

**to ponder:** Am I ready to become my own doula—my own best friend who surrounds myself with words of love, truth and encouragement to support Jesus' deepening birth in me? What's attractive in this? What do I resist? What would I like to say to God about this? What is God's word in return?

### **A PRACTICE – becoming my own Doula**

Each day spend a little time picturing a doula attending a mom during labor.

Ask: What would a doula say to me right now as my true life is coming to fuller birth in me? What would be the tone in the doula's voice, the look in the doula's eyes? What endless patience and care would the doula extend?

Become your own doula.



# Resources

## PERSONAL AND GROUP LISTENING TO GOD

### ***Listening Cards***

*see the Listening Cards on the takeaway table*

### ***Spiritual Direction***

*regular one-to-one conversations with a Spiritual Director can help discern God's presence and invitations in every season of life*

## GROUP LISTENING ACTIVITIES

### ***Listening for God during Conversations***

During ordinary conversations invite God to be present, asking God to help you listen beneath the surface of the conversation for hopes, dreams, pain, needs, and longings. Repeatedly release your need to impress, convince, or correct. Instead, cock the ear of your heart continually in God's direction, inviting his thoughts and desires to find their way into the conversation.

### ***Listening for God Before Meetings***

Church meetings that begin with a brief time of worshipful listening for God through Scripture find that an awareness of God's presence and guidance are increased during the meeting. A few minutes using the *Read, Look, Listen, Respond* method described on the **Listening Card** (tweak the method to fit your taste and group) tends to put Jesus Christ in the center of the discussion. It enhances listening and respect in the group, increases courage to take risks, makes profound things seem possible, and generally makes the work go more smoothly and be more fruitful.

### ***Listening for God at the End of Meetings***

Close meetings with a minute or two of group listening. A leader guides the group as follows:

- ◆ *Think back over the meeting today. Get a sense for the many things shared. (brief pause)*
- ◆ *If you could distill to a single word or phrase God's word to you as this meeting closes, what would that be? (pause)*
- ◆ *What would you like to say to God about that? Express your heart silently and transparently to God. (pause)*
- ◆ *What is God perhaps saying to you, in return? (pause)*
- ◆ *Receive and rest in God's word to you. (pause)*

## WELLBEING & INTIMACY

- ◆ *Life of the Beloved*, Henri Nouwen
- ◆ *Sleeping with Bread*, Dennis Linn
- ◆ *Dark Night of the Soul*, Gerald May
- ◆ *The Critical Journey*, Guelich and Hagberg
- ◆ *Open Mind, Open Heart*, Thomas Keating
- ◆ *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, Ruth Haley-Barton
- ◆ *Invitation to Retreat*, Ruth Haley-Barton
- ◆ *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer
- ◆ *Soul Craving: An Invitation to the Feast*, Joel Warne
- ◆ *How to Eat Your Bible: God's Word as Food for Your Soul*, Joel Warne
- ◆ *Practicing the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence
- ◆ *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- ◆ *A Testament of Devotion*, Thomas Kelly
- ◆ *The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, James G. Friesen
- ◆ *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, Madame Guyon
- ◆ *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Henri Nouwen
- ◆ *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Francis de Sales
- ◆ *Anthony DeMello, Writings*
- ◆ *A Tree Full of Angels*, Macrina Weiderkehr
- ◆ *Hinds Feet on High Places*, Hannah Hurnard
- ◆ *Twelve Steps to a New Day*, Ron Keller
- ◆ *The Voice of Love*, Henri Nouwen
- ◆ *The Blessing*, John Trent & Gary Smalley
- ◆ *Immortal Diamond*, Richard Rohr
- ◆ *The Genesee Diary*, Henri Nouwen
- ◆ *The Confessions of St Augustine*
- ◆ *The Sign of Jonas*, Thomas Merton
- ◆ *The Story of a Soul*, Theresa of Lisieux
- ◆ *The Journals of Thomas Merton*

## AGING

- *The Fourth Quarter of Your Life*, Hunt & Kelly
- *Tree That Survived the Winter*, Mary Fahy
- *With The End in Mind*, Kathryn Mannix
- *The Force of Character*, James Hillman
- *Beyond the Mirror*, Henri Nouwen
- *Die With Zero*, Bill Perkins
- *Beyond the Mirror*, Henri Nouwen
- *Being Mortal*, Atul Gawande
- *Can You Drink The Cup?* Henri Nouwen
- *The American Book of Living & Dying*, Richard Groves & Henrietta Anne Klauser
- *Legacy of the Heart*, Wayne Muller
- *Sacred Fire (especially Chapter 7)*, Ronald Rohlheiser
- *300 Questions to Ask Your Parents (Before It's Too Late)* Shannon Alder
- *Forest Dwelling: Spirituality for Our Wisdom Years* - <https://ost.edu/forestdwelling/>



# listening for God in Quiet

## a way of wordless prayer

- find your habitual spot for prayer
- enjoy a psalm or other Scripture to ready your heart
- set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes (increase the time as you desire)
- place yourself in a position of relaxed attention
- let your deepest self welcome God, relax with God, consent to God's presence
  - release a need to feel God; just lovingly be with God
- keep things light, loose, have no expectations or demands, remain
- when finished be grateful for the time however it went; *know God was with you!*

**wandering thoughts** - see back of card



# listening for God in Quiet

## a way of wordless prayer

- find your habitual spot for prayer
- enjoy a psalm or other Scripture to ready your heart
- set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes (increase the time as you desire)
- place yourself in a position of relaxed attention
- let your deepest self welcome God, relax with God, consent to God's presence
  - release a need to feel God; just lovingly be with God
- keep things light, loose, have no expectations or demands, remain
- when finished be grateful for the time however it went; *know God was with you!*

**wandering thoughts** - see back of card

## wandering thoughts

- when the mind wanders, just return to your intention to be with God
  - If your mind wanders 1,000 times that's 1,000 opportunities to return to Jesus!
- don't fight thoughts or try to have no thoughts
  - don't hassle yourself about wandering thoughts / expect them / simply return to God
  - let thoughts be in your head – let attentiveness to God be in your heart
- When attention drifts, say a word that signifies your intention to be with God
  - "Jesus," "abide," "welcome," (or any word that renews your intention to be with God)
- to further anchor your intention to be with God, maybe bring an image to mind
  - e.g. Mary at Jesus' feet in Luke 10, John on Jesus' breast in John 13, the children on Jesus' lap in Mark 10 - or any image that helps renew your intention to rest, remain, abide with God

### Community Use

Practice this kind of prayer in small groups, marriages, families, friendships and ministry teams. Waiting wordlessly together with God fosters joy, respectful listening, forgiveness and new possibilities in life and service. This prayer method deeply strengthens bonds of shared life in Christ in your group.

## wandering thoughts

- when the mind wanders, just return to your intention to be with God
  - If your mind wanders 1,000 times that's 1,000 opportunities to return to Jesus!
- don't fight thoughts or try to have no thoughts
  - don't hassle yourself about wandering thoughts / expect them / simply return to God
  - let thoughts be in your head – let attentiveness to God be in your heart
- When attention drifts, say a word that signifies your intention to be with God
  - "Jesus," "abide," "welcome," (or any word that renews your intention to be with God)
- to further anchor your intention to be with God, maybe bring an image to mind
  - e.g. Mary at Jesus' feet in Luke 10, John on Jesus' breast in John 13, the children on Jesus' lap in Mark 10 - or any image that helps renew your intention to rest, remain, abide with God

### Community Use

Practice this kind of prayer in small groups, marriages, families, friendships and ministry teams. Waiting wordlessly together with God fosters joy, respectful listening, forgiveness and new possibilities in life and service. This prayer method deeply strengthens bonds of shared life in Christ in your group.



# Behold the One Beholding You

## the story is told

*of a French cleric who heard that a congregation member, a peasant farmer, had an unusually deep prayer life. At first the cleric was miffed that someone in his congregation, no less a simple peasant, should be considered to pray more deeply than he! But he swallowed his pride and went to see the peasant. "Tell me," said the cleric, "what is the method of your prayer life?" The peasant looked at the cleric with some bewilderment and responded, "There is no method. I look at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me."*

## Gazing into God

**Take 10-20 minutes a few times a week** to simply lean your deepest self quietly and attentively into God. There is a deep part within you that yearns to relax with God. Give that part of yourself room to let go of the rest of the world for a few minutes and just gaze with interest, love and attention into God. Let the Holy Spirit teach you this way of prayer.

*NOTE: It can be helpful to recall the physical posture of Mary in Luke 10 as she listens at the feet of Jesus—gazing, attentive, interested, loving, quiet, surrendered, listening. Her interest is more in Jesus himself than in the things he says. Lean your inner self into God in this way. When stray thoughts come, don't worry. Each stray thought is an opportunity to lovingly return to God!*

## Gazing with God into my Life

At times a question, problem, or stuck spot arises in life. Instead of reflexively attacking the problem, strategizing, praying hard (and often worrying and freaking out) it can be really helpful to simply sit with God and be together calmly, patiently, and gently with your issue.

**Take 10-20 minutes a few times a week** to sit in company with God with your question or problem. Leave your assumptions, timetables and demands behind. While holding your issue loosely and lovingly, place your gentle attention in God. As the days pass notice changes in your perception of the situation, including a growing sense of new possibilities. Let the Holy Spirit teach you this way of prayer.

# Prayers of Gazing

*You have said, "Seek my Face." My heart says to you, "Your face Lord, do I seek!"* Psalm 27:8

## Praying Scripture

Select a piece of Scripture, maybe starting with the psalms. (Move on to other passages later.) Notice which portions of the passage connect with your own longings, joys or fears. Join your inner intention with the Scripture and pray it as your own prayer. From time to time pause to let your spirit lean toward God in wordless, worshipful union.

## Stepping into Scripture

Through God's gift of imagination step inside Scripture passages. Experience the story through the eyes of each participant. Be aware of the moments of the story that most touch you. Pause occasionally to let your deepest self gaze in union, fellowship and worshipful inquiry into God. Gospel passages are a good place to start.

## Creation

God's face is shown in nature in beautiful and healing ways. He is uniquely present in his creation. While walking in nature, occasionally let your spirit lean wordlessly and worshipfully into God.

## Your word

Think of one or two words that both express and request union with God at this time in your life (e.g. "I love you," "you're my home," or your own special words). Quietly speak these words aloud as you go about your daily routine.

## Your art or hobby

Your art or hobby are creative gifts that intimately connect you with your Creator. They are lenses into God who shares in the joy you take in your art. Pause occasionally with your art or hobby to receive God's happy gaze.

## Your pen

Many people find that when they put pen to paper their roaming thoughts get focused and God's words become more clear. As you journal from the heart, pause sometimes to let your spirit lean into and take comfort in God.



# *The Key Eldering Task*

## *Offering Blessing*

Ronald Rohlheiser

*“When one reaches the highest level of human maturity, one has only one question left: ‘How can I be helpful?’”*

Teresa of Avila

### **Turning Around**

In his book, *Sacred Fire*, Ronald Rohlheiser speaks of the constricting glue-like afterbirth that a newborn calf is encased in upon being born, and how the mother immediately turns to lick the afterbirth away to free the calf to move and test its legs, and to grow and eventually frolic.

He says we are all born with hearts encased in a kind of constricting afterbirth of self-doubt, wondering whether we’re truly wanted or fully loved or welcome. We feel afraid that if we live with our full energy we will be perceived as too loud and a bother or a threat and not be fully delighted in. So we hold back.

Rohlheiser says it’s the job of those who are becoming elders among us to turn around and metaphorically lick away that constriction through offering **blessing**: words, touch, looks, really seeing people, listening, affirmation, extending welcome—and especially through bestowing delight.

He says that all forms of blessing are transforming, but especially blessing within the sexes. Older men blessing younger men. Older women blessing younger women. Men blessing men is particularly needed because of the gaping hole in many men through not receiving their father’s blessing and the ill-fated compensating this often leads to (e.g. sex, competition and power among other things).

We can heal our own lack of parental blessing by extending blessing to others. When we bestow blessing, says Rohlheiser, we are on our way to feeling blessed and whole.

Ronald Rohlheiser, *Sacred Fire*, Chapter 7, *Its Crowning Glory, Blessing Others*