



# Renewal Presbyterian Church



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*Remember that you are dust  
and to dust you shall return*

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## What is Lent?

Geopolitical unrest. Record high levels of inflation. Global warming. Divorce. Cancer. Death. Nobody needs to be convinced that there is something wrong with the world. But sometimes, we forget this reality because we have money to buy nice things; we have medical advancements to overcome health deficiencies; and we have social media to cultivate new relationships. None of these things are inherently bad. In fact, they can be good things. But they can also be good distractions that cause us to forget our brokenness and when we forget our brokenness, we also forget our hope for redemption.

For more than a thousand years, Christians have observed the season of Lent as a sober reminder of the frailty and brokenness that exists in the world because of sin. Lent is characterized by repentance of sin and acknowledgement of our need for redemption. But it is also characterized by hope—hope not in ourselves or what we can offer, but hope in Jesus who has entered our brokenness, was crushed by it, but eventually triumphed over it through his resurrection. Therefore, Lent can be a helpful discipleship tool to intentionally center our lives on Jesus.

A photograph of a city skyline at sunset, with the sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow over the buildings. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds. The buildings are silhouetted against the bright sky. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing white text. The text is centered and reads: "About This Guide", "Like the season of Lent, this prayer guide is merely a discipleship tool meant to point us to Jesus. Therefore, feel free to utilize this guide however you like. It is broken up into 12 chapters: 1 chapter for each of the 6 weeks preceding Holy Week and 1 chapter for each of the 6 days of Holy Week. Each chapter includes a Scripture passage, a reflection on that passage, a written prayer, and a few prayer prompts. These chapters can be read in totality every day or you can pick and choose to do different elements on different days.", "The content found in this guide has been curated from a variety of different sources, some historical and some contemporary. The contemporary sources are all affiliated with the PCA denomination. If you are interested in learning more about these sources, there are brief contributor biographies in each chapter as well as a bibliography at the end of the guide. The bibliography will also include links to other articles that have been instrumental in the creation of this guide.", and "Photo by Mick Kirchman on Unsplash".

## About This Guide

Like the season of Lent, this prayer guide is merely a discipleship tool meant to point us to Jesus. Therefore, feel free to utilize this guide however you like. It is broken up into 12 chapters: 1 chapter for each of the 6 weeks preceding Holy Week and 1 chapter for each of the 6 days of Holy Week. Each chapter includes a Scripture passage, a reflection on that passage, a written prayer, and a few prayer prompts. These chapters can be read in totality every day or you can pick and choose to do different elements on different days.

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# Week 1

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## Scripture

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### Psalm 51:1-17

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

## Prayer

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O God of love,

Who hast given a new commandment through Thine only begotten Son, that we should love one another, even as Thou didst love us, the unworthy and the wandering, and gavest Thy beloved Son for our life and salvation; we pray Thee, Lord, give to us, Thy servants, in all time of our life on the earth, a mind forgetful of past ill-will, a pure conscience and sincere thoughts, and a heart to love our brethren; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord and only Saviour.

Amen.

## Prayer Points

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- Personal sin struggles
- Systemic racism
- Abusive systems in the church

# Week 1

Photo by [Patrick Fore](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Maya Angelou wrote in her autobiography, “Believe people when they tell you who they are. They know themselves better than you.” I think in a similar way it is true of us and God when He shows us our sin: “when God tells you of your sin, believe Him. He knows us better than we do.” We read of the fruit of that in Psalm 51—a psalm of penitence and repentance penned by King David, who had just been confronted by God’s messenger: the prophet Nathan. David had sinned by abusing his power, committing adultery with Bathsheba, and doubled down on his sin by trying to cover it all up with her husband Uriah’s planned death (2 Sam 11). Nathan told David a story of injustice to which David responded with righteous indignation (2 Sam 12), calling for the guilty man’s death and calling for restitution to be made to the oppressed party. To which Nathan said, “You are the man!” before pronouncing God’s judgment on David for his sins against Uriah and Bathsheba.

At the start of this year’s Lent, would we do the same as well? Our Lord disciplines all those whom He loves (Heb 12) and if by His Spirit and the Word, He has made our sin clear to us through his chosen means, would we not run away from him, defend ourselves, or try to explain it away? Just as He is the righteous Judge of David (Ps 51:4-5), David also knew Him as the God of his salvation (vv. 12, 14), who could wash and cleanse him of all his sinful stains. Because of such a God, David could confess and fully acknowledge his sin, which instead of completely ruining David was what led to the renewal of truth and joy in his life. God had to wound David by showing him his sin so he might be healed and have his “broken bones rejoice” (v. 8) as he cried out for mercy. For as Thomas Watson once said, “Til sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.”

Would that be true of us this season? Then, let’s not miss what repentance looks like in David’s psalm; it is full-bodied and whole-hearted. A turning to God looks like loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength: “truth in the inward being” (v. 6); “let me hear joy and gladness” (v. 8); “renew a right spirit within me” (v. 10); “I will teach transgressors your ways” (v. 13); “my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness” (v. 14); “my mouth will declare your praise” (v. 15). As we respond to the Spirit’s conviction, let us also consider what repentance should look like in our lives, both body and soul.

## Devotional by Wei Feng Ho



Wei Feng Ho is the campus minister of [RUF Gotham Student Movement](#), a PCA campus ministry in Midtown Manhattan. Born in Taiwan and raised in Atlanta, GA, he graduated from Georgia Tech and Reformed Theological Seminary - Atlanta. Prior to moving to NYC in 2019 to start RUF Gotham, he served as an Internship Coach at Mission to the World before becoming the pastor of college and career ministries at Westminster Presbyterian Church. He's a foodie, Atlanta Braves fan, and lover of large dogs.

## Prayer by Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444) was the Patriarch of Alexandria from 412 to 444. He was enthroned when the city was at the height of its influence and power within the Roman Empire. Cyril wrote extensively and was a major player in the Christological controversies of the late-4th and 5th centuries. Cyril is counted among the Church Fathers and also as a Doctor of the Church. His reputation within the Christian world has resulted in his titles, Pillar of Faith and Seal of all the Fathers.





# Week 2

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## Scripture

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### Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

## Prayer

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Father God,

We thank you for your mercies that are new every morning. Even through trials and tribulations, conflict, and injustice, you promise us that sin and death will not win. As we patiently wait for your return to make all things new, we lament on this side of Heaven at the brokenness and fallenness of the world.

We lament for those whose lives were taken by the injustice and evil done by another.

We lament with those affected by wars across the globe that have caused displacement, separation, and death.

We lament with those who are coming from broken homes and are longing for shalom.

We long to see reconciliation and restoration in familial relationships, in our very neighborhoods, and across all of creation. So, we ask that you would give us patience and trust like those who came before us as we wait for our faith to become sight—knowing that you are true to your word, even when our circumstances may give us reason to doubt. May you graciously remind us of your goodness and faithfulness through our grief and suffering. May we be reminded of the hope that we have in you because of what your Son Jesus did on the cross.

Amen.

## Prayer Points

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- Familial conflicts
- Local crime
- Global conflicts



# Week 2

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## Look Up

Usually when I read God’s promise to Noah to never flood the earth again, I feel a sense of relief. We don’t have to fear God’s widespread judgment. He sustains the seasons and provides common grace to all of creation. This year, however, feels different. If you’re like me, the world is overwhelming. Between wars, disease, mass shootings, natural disasters, the ongoing impacts of racism, sexism, ableism, and the rest of their “ism” alliance, I don’t feel a lot of hope in God sustaining this creation. In fact, if I’m really honest, sometimes I wish God would wipe us out to end suffering and injustice once and for all.

What stands out to me in this cultural moment, however, is the call to see God’s covenant promise: the rainbow—a physical sign of his commitment to sustain the natural order of life until the final day of consummation. The rainbow, located up in the sky, physically requires me to lift my head and look up. It requires me to break my locked gaze on the news cycle, my social media apps, my family drama, my work stress, and physically go outside, move my head, and lift my eyes. The act opens my lungs to breathe a little deeper. I am prompted to rest knowing that because God is sustaining creation, the arena is set for true and final redemption despite all of the present decay. Breathe in, breathe out. God is at work in this awful world. Wait for the consummation. Lent is a great time to look inward at our own sin and to look around us at the needy world. But don’t forget to look up at God’s rainbow for rest and confidence in his promises.

## Devotional by Sherrene DeLong



Dr. Sherrene DeLong (PhD, Higher Education) is a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professional working at Northern Virginia Community College. Her research is on South Asian American identity and navigating white supremacy in higher education. She lives in a multigenerational home with her husband, Rev. Matthew DeLong (RUF International, George Mason University), their son (Isaac, age 7), and Sherrene’s parents. They all attend [Capital Presbyterian Church](#) in Fairfax, VA.

## Prayer by Amanda Jakana

Amanda got plugged into Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) during her freshman year of college at the University of Vermont (UVM). She was part of RUF at UVM all four years of college and loved it so much that she decided to work for the ministry! After graduation, Amanda spent 2 years working as an intern with RUF at Louisiana State University (Geaux Tigers!). It was during this time that she met her now husband, Caleb who was also an intern at LSU. They got married in June 2021, moved to DC in July, and started their new jobs in August of that same year. Amanda serves as campus staff at the [University of Maryland](#) while Caleb attends Reformed Theological Seminary in DC.



# Week 3

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## Scripture

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### Romans 4:13-25

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

## Prayer

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Dear God,

You love your church so much that you gave your only Son for her, so that we could be called your children. We have been blessed and equipped with the Holy Spirit, with a community, with a building, and with finances. Everything we have is yours.

You call us to share our food with the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, visit the sick, welcome and treat foreigners justly. Yet, we tend to live for ourselves. We use and abuse your blessings and forget our neighbors. We claim we love our neighbors, but in reality, we tend to love only those who look like us, eat like us, dress like us, and speak like us. Forgive us, Lord, have mercy on us!

May the Holy Spirit guide us to be more like Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served. Being the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, he emptied himself to live among us and serve us. During this season of Lent, may our hearts be transformed so that we can live out our faith, so that we would love our neighbors in a sacrificial way, just as your Son did for us.

Amen.

## Prayer Points

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- Local homeless community
- The working poor
- Global refugee crisis

# Week 3

Photo by [Tijs van Leur](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“Some things just take time” is a phrase I have found myself repeating lately. It's when a prayer prayed long ago comes to pass, proving God's timing to be perfect again. It's not only in our prayers to God, but in the promises of God that some things just take time. Lent derives itself from the word *lenten*, meaning “long,” which requires waiting. Abraham's life was filled with much waiting, yet he exercised his faith with hope, standing on God's promises.

According to Hebrews, Abraham's life was a picture of faith: “being assured for what was hoped for and convinced of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Abraham's faith journey was complex. We see his humanity in lying about his wife or trying to make his own plan to fulfill the promise with Hagar. Yet, he was still considered faithful and righteous, returning to God's promises and choosing to believe Him. Yes, he failed, but he continued to wait; so there is hope for us all in that.

Abraham didn't live in the “I know God said, but...” thinking. He did not allow his own finite mind to lead the way but trusted that if God had promised, He would make a way. It was not about the facts; therefore, his faith wasn't affected by the facts. His faith was affected by the promise and was thereby unwavering. Our hope is not in our ability to reason. We hope in what we do not see and wait patiently for it to come to pass by God's will in God's way.

So as we journey through the season of Lent with the various ways we may be waiting on God, may we stand firm with patience, remembering that some things just take time.

## Devotional by Samantha Roberts



Samantha currently lives in Atlanta after living for a decade in Johannesburg, South Africa, serving in campus ministry. She recently graduated with her M.A. in Religion from Reformed Theological Seminary and loves sharing God's Word with others through teaching and writing. Samantha now serves to develop women as leaders across the international movement of Campus Outreach. She is zealous to see women leaders equipped as laborers, walking faithfully in their gifts to serve the Kingdom for the glory of God.

## Prayer by Israel Ruiz

Israel Ruiz is a pastor at [City Church](#) (PCA) in Wilmington, DE. He is married to Marietta and they have two children. Israel is from Lima, Peru and his wife is from Illinois. They are both bilingual and they hope to use their multicultural experience in the church. Israel went to Covenant Seminary and received a Master of Divinity. He was a pastor in Northern Virginia for 4 years before moving to Delaware.





# Week 4

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## Scripture

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### Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

## Prayer

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God,

You are God in heaven—perfect in goodness, beauty, and truth. You are the very definition of good by which all creation is measured against. As we enter your presence, we recognize that we have failed to meet the lofty expectations that you have set for us. Even our best efforts fall woefully short of your goodness, beauty, and truth. Yet, you have not turned your back on us or responded to our shortcomings with anger or contempt. Instead, you’ve welcomed us as your good daughters and sons because of Jesus. Help us to rest in the righteousness of Christ and empower us to reflect His righteousness in all that we do.

Amen.

## Prayer Points

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- Personal health concerns
- Opioid epidemic
- Mental health issues

# Week 4

Photo by [Ben Hadfield](#) on [Unsplash](#)

If I were to pitch a movie script that was loosely based on the Exodus narrative, it wouldn't be an action-movie, à la *The Prince of Egypt* or Charlton Heston's *Ten Commandments*. Mine would be a coming-of-age teenage dramedy.

The calling card of a coming-of-age movie is the impending growth of the protagonist, who leaves one reality and enters into another while learning painfully and comically what it means to embrace this new identity. This is the Exodus story in a nutshell, and at the heart of this story are the Ten Commandments.

A common understanding of the Ten Commandments within the context of the Exodus narrative—after the Red Sea crossing and before the wilderness—naturally causes us to assume that the forty years of wandering in the wilderness is the penal result of disobedience and unfaithfulness to the laws and decrees of God.

But that may not entirely be true.  
Think preparation, not punishment.

Adopting a robust wilderness theology allows us to see that the purpose of the Ten Commandments is to prepare God's people for life in his presence. Having endured generations of oppression and trauma, the Ten Commandments are given to the newly redeemed people of God as a new way to live, a better way. But this requires a prolonged season of preparation. Author Eboni Davis writes, "The habits you created to survive will no longer serve you when it's time to thrive." It takes a season in the wilderness to prepare for a lifetime in Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Lent teaches us, as God's redeemed people trying painfully, sometimes comically, to make sense of the wild world around us, that we are people of the wilderness. May we embrace this reality and lean into God's way of life for us.

## Devotional by Daniel Jung



Daniel Jung is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and an ordained pastor in the PCA. He lives in Northern California, where he serves as an associate pastor at [Home of Christ in Cupertino](#). In his spare time, Daniel loves the 49ers, good coffee, and writing media reviews for *Think Christian*.

## Prayer by Hansoo Jin

Hansoo Jin is husband to Wana and father to Jubilee, Evangeline, and Kairos. He is a native Baltimorian (Baltimoron) currently living in Philadelphia where he is an assistant pastor at [Renewal Presbyterian Church](#). In his free time, Hansoo enjoys good food, good fermented beverages, and cheering for the Baltimore Orioles.



# Week 5

Photo by [Josh Applegate](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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## Scripture

### Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

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## Prayer

Father,

Help us to see that we who are freed and made alive with Christ can find greater hope and peace in the reality of heaven. Help us to see that though we may feel financial stress, there is power in knowing that grace is still abundant for us. Help us to see that though we may see ourselves as less worthy in looking for new or better employment, we are your workmanship made beautiful and whole. Help us to see that the blessed life is not in the riches we have in this world, but in the abundant mercy given to us in Jesus. May we not fall to the worldly ways, looking to elevate ourselves, but instead may we know that you have raised us up to show us the vastness of your grace and kindness. Jesus, be the true treasure and delight of our hearts. Remind us again and again that you have paid for all our debt, so that we may be called worthy sons and daughters of God.

Amen.

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## Prayer Points

- Personal financial needs
- Unemployment rates
- Student debt crisis

# Week 5

Photo by [Josh Applegate](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I recently taught Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to 8th graders at my middle school. In spite of the groaning at the novel's complex diction, Shelley would have been gratified at the students' shock and horror as they witnessed Victor Frankenstein regenerating crudely pieced body parts into a grotesque creature and abandoning it after its birth. The Biblical allusion is a jarring one. Unlike Shelley's fictional creator who is full of cruelty, hatred, and malice, the Bible reveals God the Creator who is full of mercy, kindness, and grace.

Paul reminds us of three things—our condition, God's action, and God's reason. Paul emphatically states that we were dead—dead in our sins—dead in our trespasses. We were in complete alienation from God. We were not children of God but children of wrath. We could not be further from God. We were dead.

But God. But God steps in. But God acts with immeasurable mercy and great love. But God takes us from death and gives us life. But God rescues us from the worst status and moves us to the best standing. But God raises us up and seats us with Christ.

Amazing.

But why? I realize that our salvation is primarily about God. It's about who He is—the God of mercy, kindness, and grace. God rescues us from death, so that He “might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v. 7). We are saved by grace through faith, but even that faith is “the gift of God” (v. 8). Unlike the grotesque creature of *Frankenstein*, we are God's workmanship. He created us in Christ for good works. He rescued us to display who He is.

This week, may we be amazed by our God who is full of mercy, kindness, and grace.

## Devotional by Esther Kim



Esther Kim currently serves as a middle English school teacher in Howard County. Previously, she has served in campus ministries and children's ministries at various churches. She is married to Brian Ryu, a PCA pastor and has two children (Manny, 11, and Zoe, 8) and a cute labradoodle named Junie. Esther and her family currently attend [Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church](#) in Ellicott City, MD.

## Prayer by Seth Choi

Seth Choi has lived in and around Philadelphia most of his life. He received his M.Div at Westminster Theological Seminary, served in various churches, and currently attends [Renewal Presbyterian Church](#). He loves Jesus, his wife Eunice, and cheesesteaks.





# Week 6

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## Scripture

### Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

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## Prayer

God,

We beg and beseech you whom the enemies of the Church are forever provoking and irritating that you would tame their wild hearts. May their rage subside and calm return to their hearts; may their minds, clouded by the darkness their sins produce, repent, and see the light; may they seek the Church’s prayers and not their blood.

Amen.

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## Prayer Points

- Local churches
- The global Church’s witness
- The persecuted Church



# Week 6

Photo by [Dan Meyers](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Have you ever been disappointed by a promise that was not kept? Did you feel betrayed? What were the visceral reactions that you felt and, perhaps, showed? What did it mean to you that the promise could not be fulfilled?

Experiencing a broken promise can deeply affect us, stirring emotions from sadness to disappointment to anger. I've lost count of how many times I've felt hurt by a broken promise. There were seasons in my life when I numbed myself or conditioned myself to hold low expectations, thus guarding against belief in promises made by imperfect, fragile, broken people.

But God. God made promises that he could keep but not be reciprocated. Like the Israelites, we are the covenant-breakers (Jer 31:32). We are the ones who cannot keep the promise of loving him, worshiping him, and living to glorify him in all that we do. Yet God, foreseeing our weaknesses and the inevitability of our failures, established a new covenant. But instead of instilling laws and writing on tablets that would be broken, he wrote his words in our minds and on our hearts (Jer 31:33). He claimed with surety, "they will be *my* people...they will *all* know me" (emphasis added; Jer 31:33-34).

His divine promise anticipates our shortcomings, yet offers unfaltering forgiveness and calls for our return to Him. Like a marriage covenant, God vows to be with us—to have and to hold, to dwell together in his house forever. His new covenant, sealed by the blood of Jesus, will hold for eternity. May we look into our own hearts, knowing that his words and his spirit reside within us, and commit ourselves to upholding our promise to love him. But with this vow, even death will not part us from him.

## Devotional by Eunice Ko



Eunice Ko received her M.A. at Westminster Theological Seminary and served on staff at various churches and ministries. Though she grew up moving around as the daughter of a US Army chaplain, she is currently rooted in Philadelphia, PA with her husband, Seth. She currently serves as the executive director at [Renewal Presbyterian Church](#).

## Prayer by Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian of Carthage was a bishop of Carthage and an early Christian writer of Berber descent, many of whose Latin works are extant. He is recognized as a saint in the Western and Eastern churches.



A photograph of a cobblestone path leading towards a large cross in a cemetery. The path is made of irregular, grey stones with some moss growing between them. The cross is in the distance, centered in the frame, and is slightly out of focus. The background consists of dark, leafless trees, suggesting a winter or late autumn setting. The overall mood is solemn and reflective.

## Holy Week

In Christian tradition, Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and carries on through Spy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Black Saturday. It is a time for Christians to reflect on Jesus' journey to the Cross, beginning with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and concluding with his lonely trek from the Upper Room through Gethsemane and ultimately to Calvary and the empty tomb.

Adapted from an article from Christianity Today  
(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/h/holy-week/>)



# Holy Monday

Photo by Mick Haupt on Unsplash

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## Scripture

### John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

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## Prayer

God,

Open unto me, light for my darkness  
Open unto me, courage for my fear  
Open unto me, hope for my despair  
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil  
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow  
Open unto me, strength for my weakness  
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion  
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins  
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness  
Open unto me, love for my hates  
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself  
Lord, Lord, open unto me!

Amen.

A photograph of a street scene, possibly in a city, with a semi-transparent white overlay. The street is lined with buildings and has some trash on the ground. The title "Holy Monday" is written in a large, black, sans-serif font across the center of the overlay.

# Holy Monday

Photo by [Mick Haupt](#) on [Unsplash](#)

In the course of an interview with a pastor on the theme of racial diversity within our congregations, he shared insights that deeply resonated with me, especially regarding our tendency to overlook "perspectives and experiences outside of our own." This inclination, he noted, often arises from a belief that professional success and outcomes are paramount, obscuring our ability to empathize with those whose lives diverge significantly from our own. This conversation illuminated the story of a woman in Scripture, whose circumstances and actions might easily be dismissed by those accustomed to privilege and recognition. Yet, her story is a compelling illustration of genuine worship and discipleship.

This woman, through her humble act of washing and anointing Jesus' feet, exemplifies an extreme level of devotion and humility. Such a gesture, performed in a setting where even the least esteemed tasks were considered above the dignity of many, was a stark counter to societal norms. The act of handling someone's feet, especially in an environment as unforgiving as the ancient Near East, was so demeaned that it was often beyond what was expected of slaves. Moreover, by loosening her hair in public—a gesture of vulnerability and disregard for social conventions—she underscored her complete dedication to honoring Jesus. This behavior, deemed inappropriate by the standards of the time, signals a departure from the pursuit of societal approval towards a deeper, more personal expression of faith.

Her actions offer a pivotal lesson on worship and following the Savior, challenging us to transcend our preconceptions and biases. By embracing humility and shedding our ego, we open ourselves to the diversity of experiences and perspectives that deepen our understanding of faith and community. This narrative encourages us to look beyond the surface, recognizing the value and lessons inherent in the lives of those who might otherwise be overlooked or underestimated.

She gazes upon Jesus with a resolve that rise above concern for the opinions of others. Her actions declare, "My regard for you outweighs societal judgments. I recognize your significance, believing you are worthy of my utmost respect. No gesture of devotion is too minor for me to express my reverence. My commitment is unwavering, not influenced by the views of others. I understand who you are, and I am compelled to honor you with all that I am." In doing so, she relinquishes her ego, placing honor above personal pride.

Pride is a trait found in the heart of every individual. Yet, it is particularly prevalent among those who have achieved success according to societal benchmarks, often leading to an inflated sense of self-worth. In contrast, here we see a woman whose life experiences have humbled her to the extent that she holds no illusion of being owed a favorable existence. This absence of entitlement has liberated her, allowing her to worship the Savior with complete abandon. Her actions embody the essence of true humility and devotion, serving as a lesson that genuine freedom in worship and life comes not from the accolades we accumulate but from the surrender of our ego and the relinquishment of our claims to what we believe we deserve.

# Holy Monday

Photo by Mick Haupt on Unsplash

Take a moment to reflect on Mary's act of humility, as she uses her hair to wipe Jesus' feet. It's a powerful reminder that understanding his significance and our own obligations to him requires a heart unburdened by the opinions of others. This realization often comes more readily to those who find themselves marginalized or overlooked in our world—the forgotten ones, who are intimately familiar with humility. They often grasp more quickly the necessity of setting aside the false belief in a deserved prosperous life and the vanity of personal dignity. To truly follow Christ, one must let go of the notion of entitlement and embrace a stance of humility. It is to the humble, often found among those considered lowly by worldly standards, that grace flows most freely. For God resists the proud but extends grace to the humble, a truth deeply understood by those who live with humility every day.

Mary stands as a powerful biblical example of an individual who, despite being easily overlooked, demonstrates the true nature of worship through her actions. Characterized by humility, devotion, and a readiness to challenge societal norms, her conduct presents a clear lesson in faith. This raises an important question: Who in your life, possibly undervalued or unnoticed, could teach you a similar lesson about faith?

## Devotional by Cisco Victa




Cisco Victa is a pastor and a member of the Susquehanna Valley Presbytery. He has dedicated his life to spiritual leadership, serving in various roles within the ministry. He spent over a decade as a lead pastor in New Hampshire, where he participated in church revitalization and planting. He served as an assistant pastor with Trinity Presbyterian church (Harrisburg) and Hershey Presbyterian church. Currently, Cisco serves as the lead pastor of the [Lebanon Valley PCA](#) church plant. Previously, he completed his residency as a chaplain at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center, serving in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit. He continues to contribute to the medical center's spiritual team as an associate chaplain. Cisco's commitment to his theological education led him to earn a Masters of Divinity from Liberty University. In 2024, he earned the Doctor in Ministry degree from Knox Theological Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. His major research project focused on racial diversity in the PCA. Cisco resides in Cleona, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Kati, and their eight children: Rhema, Faith, Francisco IV, Malacai, Gloria Grace, Judah, Zion, and Phoebe. A devoted Philadelphia sports fan, he loves watching his sons' baseball games and collecting baseball cards with his twin boys.

## Prayer by Howard Thurman

Howard Washington Thurman (November 18, 1899 – April 10, 1981) was an American author, philosopher, theologian, mystic, educator, and civil rights leader. Thurman's theology of radical nonviolence influenced and shaped a generation of civil rights activists, and he was a key mentor to leaders within the civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. Thurman served as dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University from 1932 to 1944 and as dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University from 1953 to 1965. In 1944, he co-founded, along with Alfred Fisk, the first major interracial, interdenominational church in the United States.





# Holy Tuesday

Photo by Ruth H Curtis on Unsplash

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## Scripture

### John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

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## Prayer

O Lord,

Remember this city wherein we dwell and every other city and country, and all the faithful who dwell in them. Remember, O Lord, all who travel by land or water, all that labour under sickness or slavery; remember them for health and safety. Remember, O Lord, those in Thy Holy Church who bring forth good fruit, are rich in good works and forget not the poor. Grant unto us all Thy mercy and loving-kindness, and grant that we may with one mouth and one heart praise and glorify Thy great and glorious name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now, henceforth, and forever.

Amen.

# Holy Tuesday

Photo by Ruth H Curtis on Unsplash

According to a [Forbes article](#) titled, “Finding Brand Success in the Digital World,” Americans see between 4,000-10,000 ads a day. From businesses, to social media platforms, to television and the radio, to those we know, we are flooded with a variety of messages. In light of this modern day reality, it is good for us to ask what message we’re sharing as Christians? Many desire for non-Christians to know Jesus but sadly use manipulative and worldly methods to draw people to Christ and the local church. As Christians, what message are we sharing to a world that is spiritually lost?

Our primary message is “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Our message to this world is that Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah and the Savior of the nations, was lifted up on the cross in order to pay the penalty for our sins and rise from the dead so that all who turn from their sin and trust in Him alone would receive a right relationship with the Father. It’s this message that Jesus uses to draw people from all ethnic, socioeconomic, and political backgrounds to Himself. We don’t need to resort to manipulative or worldly tactics to get people to trust in Christ and join the local church. All we need to do is, as we sang in the Black Church tradition I grew up in, “Lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher, lift Him up for the world to see.” We lift Him up by verbally sharing the Gospel with non-Christians and through this message, Jesus draws all people to Himself.

## Devotional by Anthony English



Anthony English is the Assistant Director of Mission to the World’s Western Hub and National Diversity Mobilizer. He is currently enrolled at Birmingham Theological Seminary where he’s pursuing a Master of Arts in Public Theology. He has a heart for evangelism and apologetics as well as helping Christians of color find their place in what God is doing among the nations. Anthony and his wife live in Northern California with their three boys where he’s under care of the Northern California Presbytery. He and his family attend [New City Fellowship \(PCA\)](#) in Sacramento, CA.

## Prayer by John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (c. 347 – 14 September 407) was an important Early Church Father, who served as archbishop of Constantinople. He is known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, his “Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom,” and his ascetic sensibilities. The epithet *Chrysostom* means “golden-mouthed” in Greek and denotes his celebrated eloquence.





# Spy Wednesday

Photo by Richard on Unsplash

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## Scripture

### John 13:21-30

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

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## Prayer

God,

That mystic word of Thine, Sovereign Lord! Is all too pure, too high, too deep for me; Weary of striving, and with longing faint, I breathe it back again in prayer to Thee. Abide in me, O Lord, and I in thee; From this good hour, O leave me nevermore; Then shall the discord cease, the wound be healed, the life-long bleeding of the soul be o’er. Abide with me—overshadow with thy love each half-formed purpose and dark thought of sin; Quench e’er it rise each selfish, low desire, and keep my soul as Thine—calm and divine. As some rare perfume in a vase of clay pervades it with a fragrance not its own—so, when thou dwellest in a mortal soul. All heaven’s own sweetness seems around it thrown. The soul alone, like a neglected harp, grows out of tune, and needs that Hand divine; dwell Thou within it, tune and touch the chords, till every note and string shall answer Thine. Abide in me; there have been moments blest, when I have heard thy voice and felt thy power; then evil lost its grasp, and passion, hushed, owned the divine enchantment of the hour. These were but seasons beautiful and rare; abide in me—and they shall ever be; fulfill at once thy precept and my prayer; come and abide in me, and I in thee.

Amen.



# Spy Wednesday

Photo by Richard on Unsplash

When Jesus had said these things, he became troubled in spirit. He knew Judas would betray him for money, he knew his disciples would scatter, and Peter would deny him. Jesus was deeply acquainted with human frailty and weakness—not only from his experience of life in a human body, but also from living in society, up close and personal with first, his family, and then later, these disciples and the others who had traveled around with him for several years. No wonder his spirit was troubled.

And these disciples—the future leaders of his church—were a hot mess. When Jesus said, again, “One of you will betray me,” they had no idea who it would be. They weren’t confident in themselves or their comrades. Peter’s gesture at John, being seated the closest to ask Jesus who he was talking about, may be the most awkward moment in Scripture. Peter was worried he was the betrayer, but he couldn’t bear to ask for himself. Jesus had told him already about his denial, and he was the disciple who experienced the most reproof, including a “Get behind me, Satan” (John 8:33) moment. Peter struggled to integrate all the truths Jesus taught—even responding as if to say, “You’re the Messiah, you obviously can’t die!” (Mark 8:31-32). He was the disciple who denied Jesus three times (John 13:38).

And yet, Peter is not the one who betrays Jesus. That title was reserved for the one who sold Jesus out to the authorities. Jesus had taught the disciples that the hierarchy of his kingdom was upside down—to seek to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45; John 13:12-15). Judas hears that message and chooses to uphold the old hierarchy, the old values, and to his own profit. Peter denies, repents, and is restored as noted in the Gospels and later in Acts. What will you do?

## Devotional by Emily Hubbard



Emily Hubbard, a St. Louis city resident, is from Mississippi. She is an adjunct professor of sociology, writer, mother of four children, pastor’s wife, and school board member. She loves gardening, crocheting and hymns. Emily and her family attend [New City South \(PCA\)](#) in St Louis, MO.

## Prayer by Harriett Beecher Stowe

Harriet Elisabeth Beecher Stowe (June 14, 1811 – July 1, 1896) was an American author and abolitionist. She wrote the popular novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which depicts the harsh conditions experienced by enslaved African Americans. The book reached an audience of millions as a novel and play, and became influential in the United States and in Great Britain, energizing anti-slavery forces in the American North, while provoking widespread anger in the South. Stowe wrote 30 books, including novels, three travel memoirs, and collections of articles and letters. She was influential both for her writings as well as for her public stances and debates on social issues of the day.





# Maundy Thursday

Photo by [Todd Diemer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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## Scripture

### John 14:1-17

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

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## Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Quiet our troubled hearts with your presence. You are the hope of our souls, our anchor that goes up heavenward to the Father. You are our forerunner, entering the presence of God on our behalf to intercede for us (Heb 6:19-20). We give you our sin and we rejoice that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for your bountiful redemption. Grow in us a greater longing for your return when we will dwell with you. Give us more sensitivity to your Spirit of truth, that we may live in light of our adoption. Cultivate in us loving obedience, for your glory and for the good of the world.

Amen.

# Maundy Thursday

Photo by [Todd Diemer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Jesus is going away, and his disciples cannot follow. Yet, he tells them not to fear because he will still be with them. How contradictory! This passage is framed with the promise that God is with us. Jesus leaves to prepare a place for us with the Father, promising to return and bring us to be with him (John 14:2). In the meantime, he keeps his promise to never leave or forsake us by giving the Holy Spirit to dwell in us forever (John 14:16).

“God with us” is the drumbeat of God’s heart throughout the Bible. It is his motivation for choosing his people and working redemption (Deut 31:6, Jer 31:33). Jesus is Emmanuel come to earth, God in the flesh (John 1:14). The goal of eternity is God dwelling with his people, where we will see him face to face (1 John 3:2, Rev 21:3).

Isn’t it interesting that in this conversation Jesus skips over how he is getting to the Father? Jesus has previously told his disciples that he will die and rise again. But in this moment, Jesus emphasizes the purpose of his death: our redemption, so we may be with the Father. Jesus is the way to the Father. The intimacy he has with the Father is the same we have with the Spirit. Because we have the Spirit, we can experience the same intimacy with Jesus. In this way, Jesus solidifies our belonging to the Father. Though Jesus is not physically with us now, we have the Holy Spirit. We are not orphans (John 14:18). We need not fear. God is with us.

## Devotional and Prayer by Laura Straka



Laura Straka has worked for Reformed University Fellowship at Emory University since 2014. She loves talking to college students about Jesus and teaching the Bible. She has a MABS from Reformed Theological Seminary - Atlanta. She and her husband, Weston, love their church, [Atlanta Westside Presbyterian](#), and their neighborhood!

# Good Friday

Photo by [Dylan McLeod](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## Scripture

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### John 17

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

## Prayer

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Jesus, our Lord and our God,

You gave your cheek to those who struck you and for our sake you endured much mockery. Grant that following the example of your sufferings, we may be courageous in bearing our own, and learn from you. For you are meek and lowly in heart. You now reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Amen

# Good Friday

Photo by [Dylan McLeod](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Recently my little baby girl had a fever. Her eyes became glassy-bright and she slept a great deal. She was listless, her normal happy self seemingly empty of its heart. As I watched her fever climb, it became harder and harder for me to heed the doctor's advice to "let her body fight the infection on its own unless her temperature rises above 102 degrees." But her little 4-month-old body needs to learn to fight infection, to learn how to produce white blood cells, so that it will be able to deal with every subsequent infection. To suppress her fever too soon would hinder her body's abilities. So I held her, letting her sleep for hours against me while the battle raged inside her little tiny body.

In some ways, Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 reflects this. He knows that in the world we will encounter great evil, that it has every potential to harm us. But instead of asking the Father to remove us from the world, Jesus asks the Father to protect us. "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from evil" (John 17:15). That protection comes in the form of belonging. We belong, in some mystical sense, to God in the same way the Trinity belongs to itself. "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me." This Lenten season, be still and rest in the knowledge that you belong to God. May God's presence be with you, holding you, protecting you—even when you encounter evil and suffering—for you are the beloved child of God.

## Devotional by Esther Van Dyke



Dr. Esther Van Dyke is a writer and poet living in downtown Baltimore. The city is for her a place of beauty and sorrow, which brings the greatest vision of humanity into focus. She writes to make this humanity more visible. She holds a PhD in Romance Languages and Literatures from the University of Chicago and has contributed to the Smart Museum of Art's exhibition catalogue, *Classicisms*, among other scholarly publications. She and her family attend [Faith Christian Fellowship \(PCA\)](#) in Baltimore, MD.

## Mozarabic Prayer

The Mozarabs or more precisely Andalusí Christians, were the Christians of al-Andalus, or the territories of Iberia under Muslim rule from 711 to 1492.

# Black Saturday

Photo by [Jeremy Bishop](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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## Scripture

### John 19:38-42

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

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## Prayer

If Lord, Thy love for me is strong  
As this which binds me unto thee,  
What holds me from thee Lord so long,  
What holds thee Lord so long from me?  
O soul, what then desirest thou?  
Lord I would see thee, who thus choose thee.

What fears can yet assail thee now?  
All that I fear is but lose thee.  
Love's whole possession I entreat,  
Lord make my soul thine own abode,  
And I will build a nest so sweet  
It may not be too poor for God.

A soul in God hidden from sin,  
What more desires for thee remain,  
Save but to love again,  
And all on flame with love within,  
Love on, and turn to love again.

Amen

# Black Saturday

Photo by [Jeremy Bishop](#) on [Unsplash](#)

In the Lenten season and among Holy Week, Holy Saturday may be the most ignored and seemingly insignificant of days. But a key to understanding the significance of Holy Saturday is to remember it was the day of the Jewish Sabbath.

For the Jewish people, they had always had a pattern of 6 days of work and 1 day of rest. In a sense, you can say the embedded pattern was that they “worked for rest.” Yet, no one could work in such a way to achieve and enter the rest God had promised. That is...until Jesus came.

Jesus was the only one who came and lived a life of perfect obedience, even unto death on a cross, and even in one sense, unto the grave. Jesus lived as one under the Law, and on Holy Saturday, kept the command of the final Jewish Sabbath as his body rested in the tomb.

But on that glorious Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the grave and changed everything. Jesus changed the entire Sabbath pattern from 6 days of work to earn 1 day of rest to 1 day of rest empowering 6 days of work. Without Christ, we “work for rest”; but in Christ, we “work from rest.” And to make that as clear as possible, the Sabbath that was observed on Saturdays for a millenia was changed by Jesus’ resurrection, to now being observed on Sundays, the first day of the week.

So this Holy Saturday, as you eagerly anticipate celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, remember his obedience on our behalf—even to rest in a tomb. So now we live a life freed from performance to one resting in His life and working now from our rest in Him.

## Devotional by Tony Thomas



Tony Thomas is the pastor of [Joy of All Nations Church](#) (PCA) in Suwanee, GA, a minority-led, multi-ethnic church plant seeking to empower and reach especially the large South Asian and East Asian community in Northeast Atlanta. He received a BS in Chemical Engineering, a MDiv at Columbia International University (CIU) and is currently finishing a DMin program at Metro Atlanta Seminary (MAS). For 12 years, Tony ministered at a largely Pan-Asian church in Illinois where he and his wife, Marilyn, also led a South Asian ministry. He has also pastored international and ethnic ministries including Korean, Filipino, Taiwanese, Japanese, Indonesian, Latino, Vietnamese, and Black & African. Tony and Marilyn are the proud parents of Joy, John, and Joshua. They have much fun together, especially on Friday movie nights with homemade pizzas and popcorn. Some of Tony's passions are playing sports, especially basketball and football, coaching his kids' sports and rooting for his hometown Bulls, Bears, and Cubs.

## Teresa of Ávila

Teresa of Ávila, (Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda Dávila y Ahumada; 28 March 1515 – 4 or 15 October 1582), also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, was a Carmelite nun and prominent Spanish mystic and religious reformer.





### Additional Resources for Lent

- What is Lent? (<https://www.christianity.org.uk/article/what-is-lent>)
- From Dust to Dust ([https://shereadstruth.com/from-dust-to-dust/#:-:text=Ash%20Wednesday%20is%20a%20day%20of%20repentance.&text=We%20remember%20that%20from%20the,\(Romans%203%3A23\).](https://shereadstruth.com/from-dust-to-dust/#:-:text=Ash%20Wednesday%20is%20a%20day%20of%20repentance.&text=We%20remember%20that%20from%20the,(Romans%203%3A23).))
- Psalm 17: A Prayer for Asian Americans (<https://www.asianamericanchristiancollaborative.com/article/psalm-17-a-prayer-for-asian-americans>)
- How Asian American Christians Can Pray Petitionary Prayers (<https://sola.network/article/christians-pray-petitionary-prayers/>)

### Dr. Sherrene DeLong

- Book Chapters
  - DeLong, S. (2020). A hospitality of words. In D. Serven (Ed.), Hear us Emmanuel: Another call for racial reconciliation, representation, and unity in the church. (pp. 221-230). White Blackbird Books.
  - DeLong, S. (2018). The sacraments: A catholic, cross-cultural, and multi-ethnic event. In L. Brown (Ed.), All are welcome: Toward a multi-everything church. (pp. 107-126). White Blackbird Books.
- Public Articles
  - DeLong, S. (2021) Spirituality in college. Thriving Together Series, Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, George Mason University.
  - DeLong, S. (2020, October 26). Unpacking my tiffin. Made for Pax.
  - DeLong, S. (2020, August 27). The pain and positivity of Indian Matchmaking. The Asian American Christian Collaborative.
  - DeLong, S. (2020, April 20). Hope in our covenant keeping God. enCourage blog.
  - DeLong, S. (2019, August 8). Don't assume White is normal. The Gospel Coalition.
  - DeLong, S. & Ventura, B. (2019, March 4). The sacred vagina? Nadia Bolz-Weber and sexual purity. The Mod.
- Podcast Appearances
  - Cultural Identity and Asian American Stereotypes. The Reclaim Podcast. (2021, March 10).

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- <https://www.kalipca.org/posts/how-to-survive-ga>

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- <https://pazdanjung.substack.com>
- <https://thinkchristian.net/contributors/daniel-jung>

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- <http://samanthamroberts.com>

Dr. Esther Van Dyke

- <https://evandyke1729.substack.com/>

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