

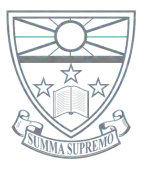


Prayers of transformation

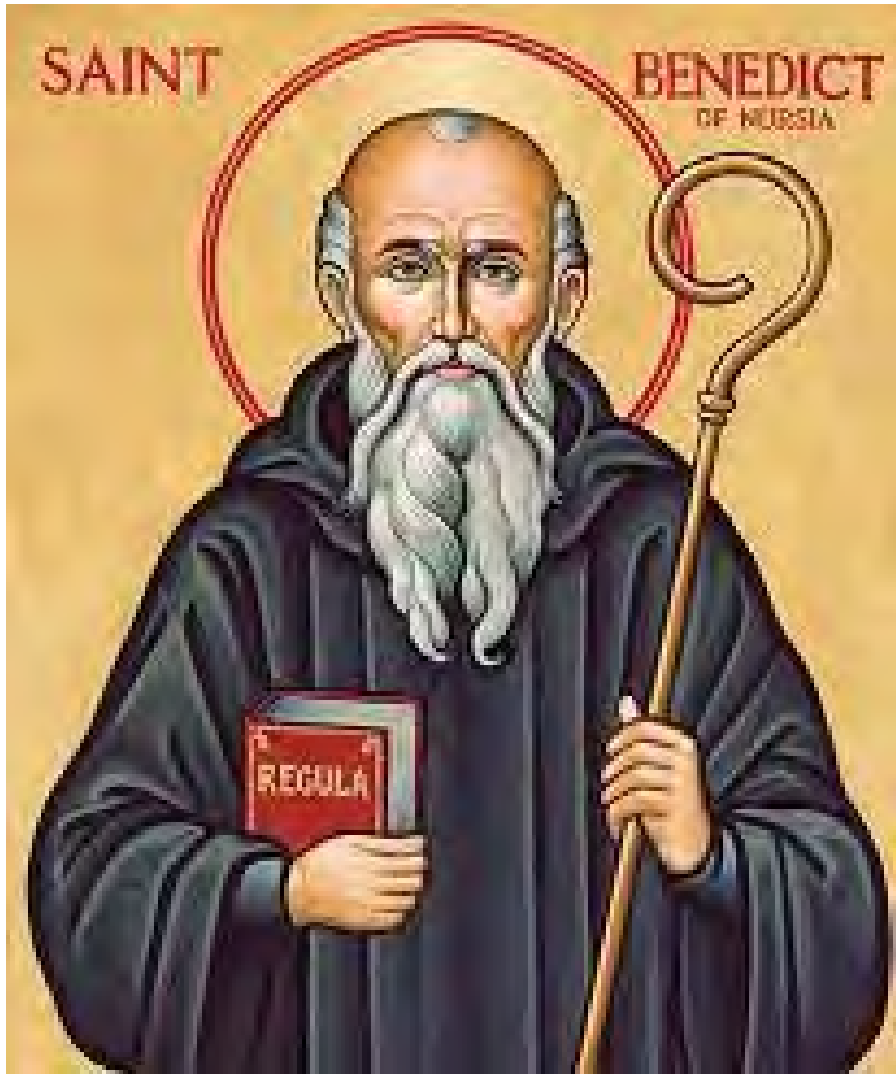
Discipleship Groups Stimulus Resource

Semester 1, 2022

This booklet contains a selection of prayers that highlight different aspects of transformation and faith. Use them as a stimulus when you meet and pray together! You don't have to look at the prayers in order and, as always, be open to your discussions going beyond what is included here. Some of these prayers are translated or can be found in different versions. Where possible, a reference is included so you can read more.



A prayer of Benedict



from Wendy Noble

I chose this prayer because it reminds me that God can use all of me: my intellect, diligence, patience, eyes, heart and very life, when I submit to him and trust him. It is humbling to reflect on how God has worked through individuals throughout history to reach the lost, discover truth, solve problems, and bring about justice. While some believers seem to be anti-intellectual, clearly God created our minds as well as our hearts, and it is exciting to be teaching in a college where both are celebrated and exercised. Yet, we are broken and must remember where our help comes from. As the poet Lucy Shaw writes:

In Dayspring, all our fragments: body, mind,
And spirit join, unite against the night.
Healed by your love, corruption and decay
Are turned, and whole, we greet the light of day.

(from 'Within This Strange and Quickening Dust')

**Father,
Give us wisdom to perceive you,
intellect to understand you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate on you
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit for our Lord Jesus
Christ.**

**Benedict, (480-543AD), founded the Benedictine
order of monks**

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen.

from Peter Friend

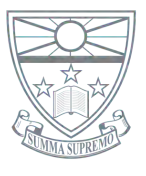
There's one prayer in the Bible that over time has continued to grab my attention, and in an odd way. It is the famous prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14–21. This is an incredibly rich prayer theologically, and commentators have had much to say about it! But beyond all these theological statements, it's the fact that this is a prayer that has really got under my skin. This passage is not a piece of theological teaching (although we can learn much from it); it's an impassioned prayer to God that God would do something very deep for these Ephesian believers. Paul wasn't teaching the Ephesians at this point; he was praying for them!

To consider

This prayer raises the following questions, which could be good to wrestle with in your group, just as I have been wrestling with these issues in my own life.

1. What does the gospel achieve in a person's life? And what does prayer achieve? Are they distinct categories? Or do they overlap or interact in some way, and if so, how?
2. Do we put much effort into praying for people to grow in Christ?
3. Think of yourself in five years' time. Will your ministry be characterised by prayer as much as teaching the Bible? What steps can you take to make it so?
4. Is there anyone you know (including yourself) who needs a breakthrough in grasping "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ"?

Space for reflection



Peace Prayer of Francis of Assisi



from Keith Mitchell

Francis of Assisi is considered one of the ancient fathers from the 12th to 13th Century. Francis is renowned for his love of animals and nature, and his vow of poverty. It could be said that he was the ultimate ecologically, environmentally, and climate aware guy of his time. It could, also, be stated that living minimalistically might have been a real challenge for Francis; but living that way for us would be literally impossible. We can learn a lot from Francis as we face our media soaked world of comparison, materialism, and need for social identity. He may have appeared as a radical in his day but aspects of his philosophy and theology are acceptable and relevant for us today. This can be seen in the words of his most famous prayer provided below. Consider the depth of theology that imbues this prayer as you reflect upon it and how it might challenge you. Feel free to connect to relevant biblical passages for each line and/or aspect of the prayer, and express your sentiments regarding the manner that you live with other people. Consider then making this prayer your own after you have deconstructed, and reflected upon it. You can also watch a singing rendition of this prayer performed by Sarah McLachlan if you like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agPnMxp5Ooc>

**Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.**

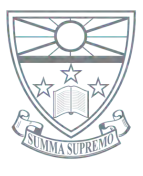
**For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

Amen.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Psalm 34:8-14

**Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
9 Fear the Lord, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.
10 The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.
11 Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
12 Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,
13 keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.
14 Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.**

from Paul Kang

The world is obsessed with being happy. We equate financial stability with happiness. We need constant pleasure that comes in instantaneous forms and means. It is an even greater challenge for believers to connect joy in our relationship with God. Many Christians do not see that there is joy in following Jesus and being in a relationship with God. Some view God as the authoritative figure who counts our sins on a minute, second basis. Some view God as a deistic figure who sets the universe in motion and don't really care about our individual needs and feelings..., well at least, that's how I regarded God at some point in my stages of youth.

David encourages us to taste and see God because He is Good! Before tasting and seeing the goodness of the things that the world provides, how can we taste and see God's goodness? Or when can this be done? The Bible that you have may have a heading before Psalm 34. The heading in the NIV bible reads, "Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left." This is quite striking when we realize that David is encouraging the hearers of his psalm to taste and see God's goodness while he is acting like a madman, drooling saliva and murmuring silly words for the purpose of survival. If we were to only enjoy God when things are going right, when the finance has bounced from red to black, when there are victorious testimonies to tell others, then maybe we will never be able to enjoy God's goodness and proclaim His goodness in our lives.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this passage?
2. Are there ideas or concepts that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

- How can we enjoy God's presence in our lives?
- Try to put yourself in David's shoes. What would have been the biggest factor for David being faithful and being able to taste and see God's goodness in such a dire circumstance?
- How were you able to still praise and enjoy God during the difficult times?

Space for reflection



Prayer of Humble Access



from David Starling

One Sunday morning back in December 2020, I skipped church to visit my parents in hospital. ... It all went more or less to plan. We logged into the livestream service through our separate devices, in separate wards of the hospital, and listened to the minister preach about resurrection, embodiment and the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15. There were prayers for our nation and our world, and for various members of the congregation including Mum and Dad. And then—taking us somewhat by surprise—the minister announced that they would be celebrating the Lord’s supper. We watched on the screen as he led us in a prayer of general confession and the words of institution, before peeling back the foil lid from an individually pre-packaged wafer and grape juice serving with his latex-gloved hands and asking for a pile of similar packages to be distributed by his masked and gloved assistants. ... At the most fundamental level, we come to the table (and to every aspect of our gatherings) not as performers of a perfect piece of religious theatre, but as hungry, weary, grace-dependent children, needing to be fed.

In the days ahead, we will still need to keep working through all the questions (including some quite tricky and complicated ones) that the pandemic has added to the “how to do church” conversation. I hope we have those conversations well, and that we think carefully about the way our practices should be shaped by Scripture and centred on the gospel. ... But I hope, too, that in the midst of all that, we have an ever-deepening awareness of the grace that is at the heart of the gospel we preach. And I hope, too, that the grace we rely on for ourselves will spill over into humility, generosity and patience in our dealings with others as we work these things through. Because we are all, when everything is said and done, unworthy of even the crumbs beneath the table that we are invited to sit at.

You can read David's whole blog post here: <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-crumbs-under-your-table/>

**We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.**

**We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.**

**But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.**

**Grant us, therefore gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood,**

**that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.**

The “Prayer of Humble Access,” as adapted in
An Australian Prayer Book from the version in the Book of Common Prayer.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Zechariah 13:9

They will call on my name and I will answer them.

from Anthony Petterson

The post-exilic age was a time when the people of God felt a disconnect between the wonderful promises of God and the difficult reality of their circumstances. They also felt the pain of sin and were tempted to give up on God. We may feel the same today. We know the marvellous promises of God, and yet so often our families, our churches, our own lives are a struggle, especially with the frustrations and disappointments that the pandemic has brought. We are tempted to give up, or become cynical.

The prophet Zechariah was given a vision of cleansing from sin and impurity that would be won through the Lord's shepherd being struck.

Have you considered the privilege of prayer? Jesus went to the cross so that we can pray. Often we see prayer as a chore or duty, or take it for granted, but prayer is a profound privilege of being one of God's people. It is an expression of the relationship with God that Jesus has won for us. In the difficult circumstances that God's people found themselves, Zechariah looks towards a time when God will step into human history and enable his people's prayers to be heard once again. We experience this through Jesus. In the difficult circumstances of life, we can pray knowing that he will answer us. Thank God for the cleansing and relationship he has won for us in Jesus' death. Thank God for the privilege of prayer. Pray for the removal of idols and false prophets in our day.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this passage?
2. Are there ideas or concepts that resonate with you?
3. How were you able to still praise and enjoy God during the difficult times?
4. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

- In what ways will God cleanse the inhabitants of Jerusalem in vv. 1–6?
- Read Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27. Who does Jesus understand the shepherd of v. 7 to be?
- What is the outcome of the shepherd being struck for God's people?
- What does this passage teach about prayer?

Space for reflection



A prayer of Michael Leunig

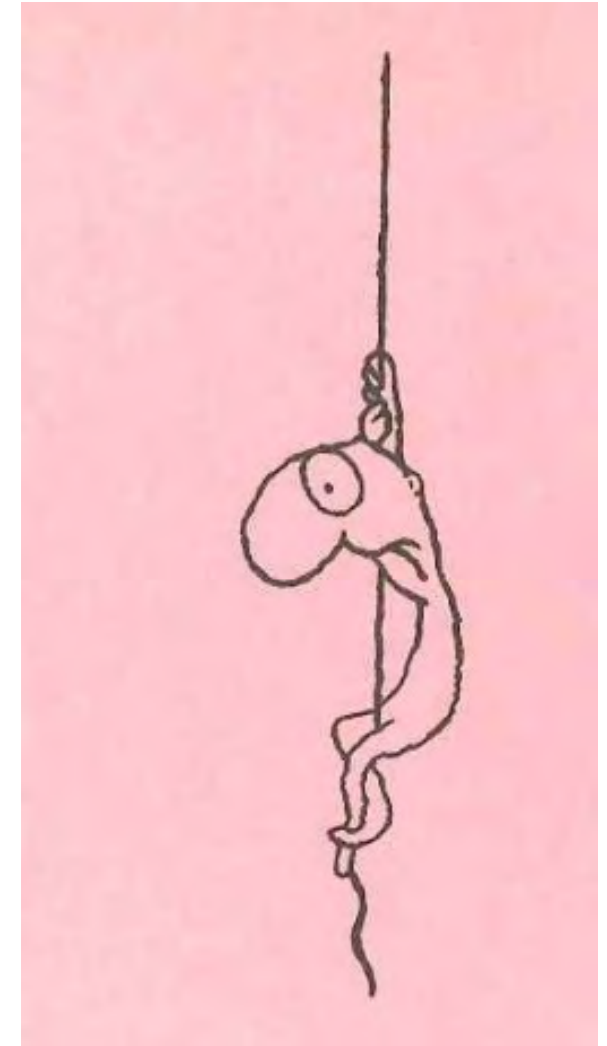
**God give us strength.
Strength to hold on
and strength to let go.
Amen**

A prayer by Leunig, Michael., 2004. *When I talk to you*. Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins.

from Gayle Kent

This is such a short prayer (only 14 words) but packs a punch. It reminds me that God is the giver of strength, and that we need it. I am challenged by the prayer's simplicity and complexity. Sometimes we need God's wisdom and insight to help us understand what we need to hold onto and what we need to let go. Other times, it is more obvious, especially if we read the 'take off/put on' passages of the Bible. At times, God asks us to hold on or let go when we really don't want to. We are called to hold on in obedience; we are invited to partner with Jesus in sacrifice and relinquishment.

This prayer reminds me that the knowledge of what to hold on to and what to let go is an initial step (maybe before that we need to even recognise this part of our formation). The next step is to do it. And as the simple cartoon shows, holding on and letting go can be a daunting challenge; for us as individuals and as a community. It takes courage, faith, and hope. I am grateful that we can ask God for strength, and know he is capable of giving it.



To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

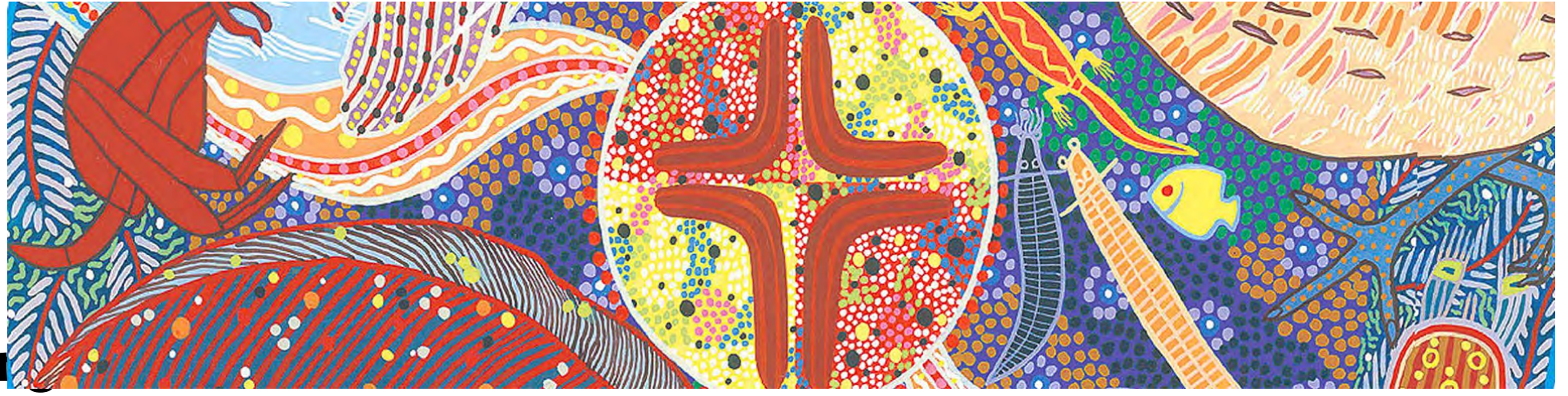
- What does God's strength look and feel like?
- What is it that I/we should hold on to? What do we/I need to let go of?
- What difference does it make when I seek God's strength all the time, not just when my own strength seems depleted?
- What impact does holding on/letting go have on my/our faith and witness?

Space for reflection



Reconciliation Prayer

**Holy Father, God of Love,
You are the Creator of all things**



**We acknowledge the pain and shame of our history
and the sufferings of Our peoples,
and we ask your forgiveness.**

We thank you for the survival of Indigenous cultures

**Our hope is in you because you gave your Son Jesus
to reconcile the world to you.**

**We pray for your strength and grace to forgive, accept and love one another, as you
love us and forgive and accept us in the sacrifice of your Son.**

**Give us the courage to accept the realities of our history so that we may build a
better
future for our Nation.**

Teach us to respect all cultures.

Teach us to care for our land and waters.

**Help us to share justly the resources of this land. Help us to bring about spiritual
and social change to improve the quality of life for all groups in our communities,
especially the disadvantaged.**

Help young people to find true dignity and self-esteem by your Spirit.

**May your power and love be the foundations on which we build our families, our
communities and our Nation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

(Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group 13 March 1997 Brisbane, Qld)

from Wontulp-Bi-Buya College <https://www.wontulp.qld.edu.au/> The name Wontulp-Bi-Buya stands for faith and the light of Christ. It is made up of an Aboriginal language word and two Torres Strait Islander language words..

To consider

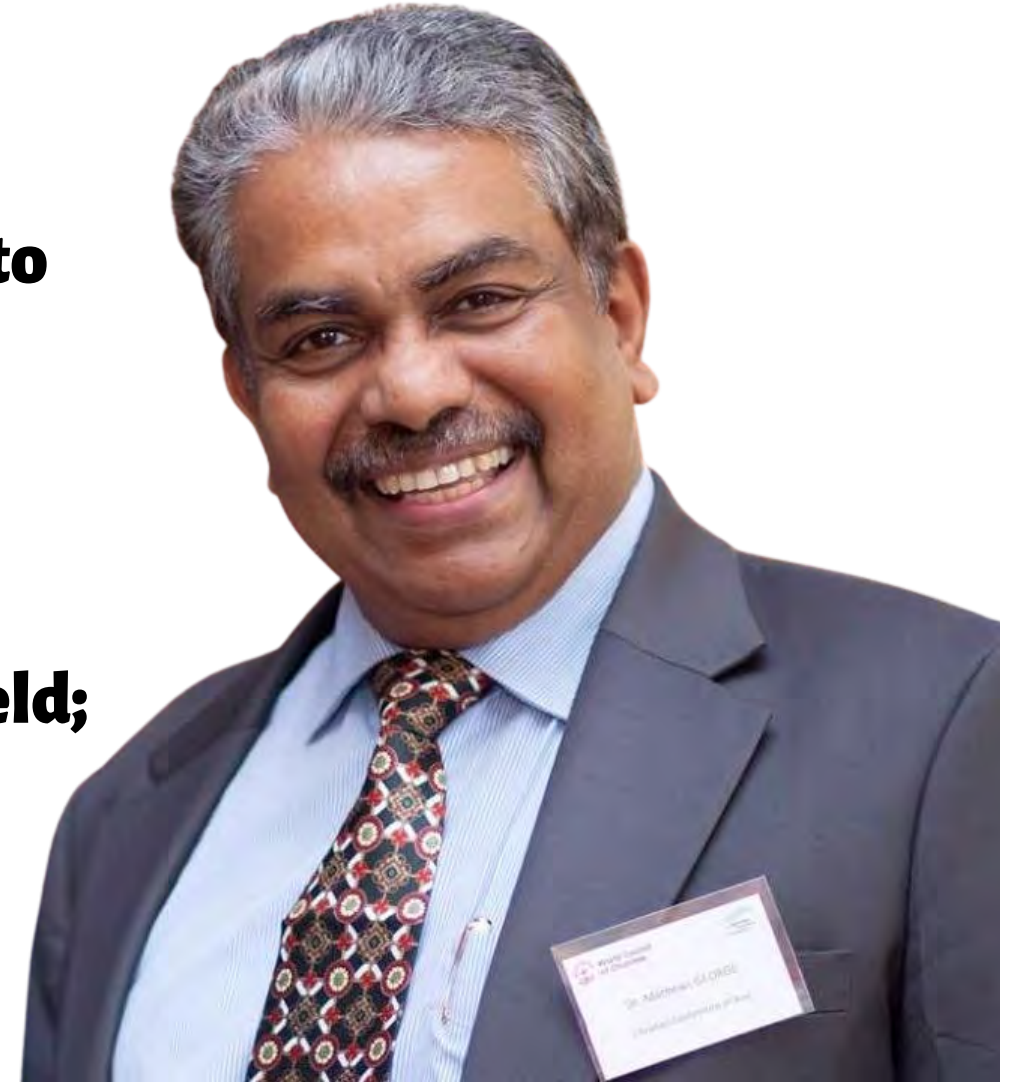
1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



A prayer for our time

**God,
In faith and hope, we come to You and confess our
weakness and vulnerability.
At this time of our fragility, fear, and death, we come to
You.
Make us well, and we will be well,
Be our Saviour and we will be safe,
For us, You are our hope.
We believe that You are our strength; You are our shield;
In our helplessness, we trust that You are our refuge.
In our vulnerability, You are our shelter.
In the midst of darkness, You give us light and rays of
hope.
In our pain and suffering, You give us the ability to live
in hope with courage; and the wisdom to overcome all
difficulties.
God of compassion, make us to be concerned for all those
who are suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
God of hope, heal us, protect us, and sustain us by Your
divine grace.
Amen.**



Dr Mathews George Chunakara
General secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia,
2021

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Before us by Walter Brueggemann

**Giver of all our years,
ruler of all our times,
for this beginning - and all beginnings, we give
you thanks,
We pray for energy and freedom and courage
proper to a beginning, and ask for your gifts.
While we begin, we acknowledge that
we are not, here, not ever, at a beginning
Before us were our mothers and fathers;
before us were our teachers and pastors;
before us were many scholars who worked hard
and saw much,
before us were fanatics who have run great
risks,
and have kept the text for us.**



**And before all of them, you
you in your wisdom and your glory,
you in your power and your mercy.
We make our beginning in the presence of these
witnesses,
we make our beginning from you and toward you
and in you,
that our work and study should be as praise to
you.**

Opening class in Old Testament Theology/ Sept 10 1988

**You who give all our years,
You who rule all our times. Amen.**

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



A prayer of Teresa of Avila

**Govern everything by your wisdom,
O Lord, so that my soul may always be serving
you
in the way you will and not as I choose.
Let me die to myself so that I may serve you;
let me live to you who are life itself.
Amen.**



To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Covenant prayer - adapted by John Wesley

**I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be
ratified in heaven.
Amen.**



John Wesley Preaching from the Steps of a Market Cross
William Hatherell (1855–1928)

The Wesleyan Covenant Prayer was adapted by John Wesley, the co-founder of Methodism (along with his brother, Charles) for the renewal of the believer's covenant with God. Wesley says that the prayer was first used in a covenant renewal service held on Monday, August 11, 1755, in London, with 1800 people present. Since then, the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer has often been used in Methodist services around the world on the first Sunday of the year. (updated English version as used in the Methodist Worship Book, 1999)
[<https://www.chapelwood.org/am-site/media/wesleyan-covenant-prayer.pdf>]

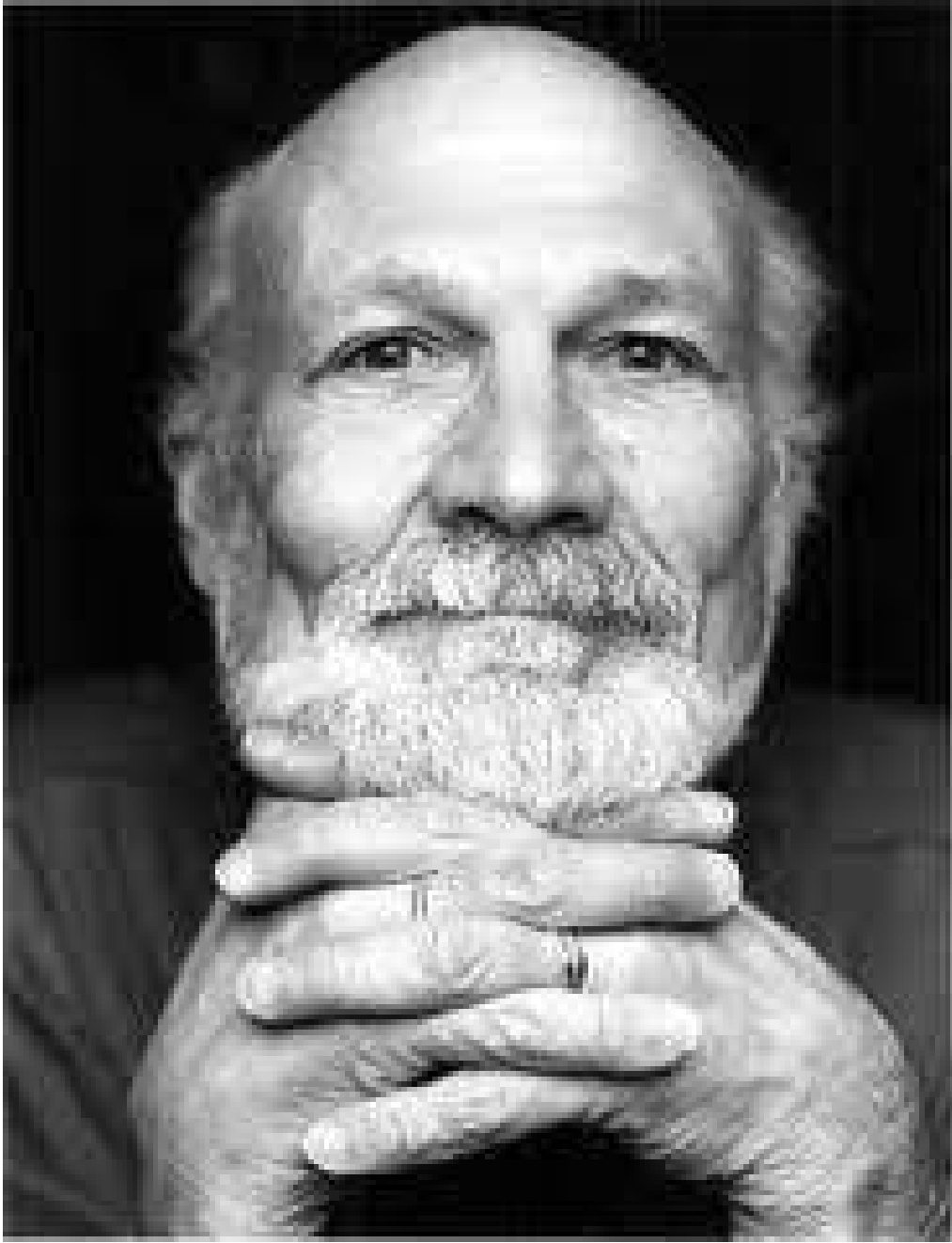
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Space for reflection



The Joy and Terror of routine by Stanley Hauerwas



THANK YOU, GOD, for giving us ordinary lives. We love the joy that comes from routine. The time you give us to eat breakfast, to come to class, to study, is wonderful. Help us not to forget the terror that surrounds us as well as dwells within the routine.

I eat my bagel while some not far from me starve. I think I would have it otherwise, but I do not how to have it otherwise.

And in my helplessness I wilfully forget the starving so I can enjoy my bagel. Help us remember. Help us to know how to share so that the nourishing routines of your kingdom may be known to all.

AMEN

from Hauerwas, S. *Prayers Plainly Spoken*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



A prayer of Martin Luther



**Behold, Lord,
An empty vessel that needs to be filled.
My Lord, fill it.
I am weak in faith; Strengthen thou me.
I am cold in love; Warm me and make me fervent
That my love may go out to my neighbour.
I do not have a strong and firm faith;
At times I doubt and am unable to trust thee altogether.
O Lord, help me.
Strengthen my faith and trust in thee.
In thee I have sealed the treasures of all I have.
I am poor; Thou art rich
and didst come to be merciful to the poor.
I am a sinner; Thou art upright.
With me there is an abundance of sin;
In thee is the fullness of righteousness.
Therefore, I will remain with thee of who I can receive
But to whom I may not give.
Amen.**

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



A puritan prayer: Disciple's Renewal

O MY SAVIOUR,

Help me.

**I am so slow to learn,
so prone to forget,
so weak to climb;**

**I am in the foothills when I should be
on the heights;**

**I am pained by my graceless heart,
my prayerless days,
my poverty of love,
my sloth in the heavenly race,
my sullied conscience,
my wasted hours,
my unspent opportunities.**

I am blind while light shines around me:

**take the scales from my eyes,
grind to dust the evil heart of unbelief.**

**Make it my chiefest joy to study thee,
meditate on thee,
gaze on thee,**

sit like Mary at thy feet,

lean like John on thy breast,

appeal like Peter to thy love,

count like Paul all things dung.

Give me increase and progress in grace

so that there may be

more decision in my character,

more vigour in my purposes,

more elevation in my life,

more fervour in my devotion,

more constancy in my zeal.

As I have a position in the world,

keep me from making the world my position;

May I never seek in the creature

what can be found only in the Creator;

Let not faith cease from seeking thee

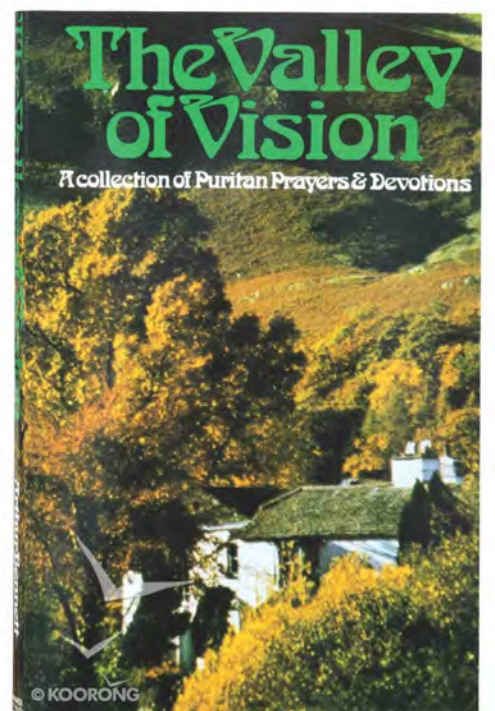
until it vanishes into sight.

Ride forth in me, thou King of kings

and Lord of lords,

that I may live victoriously,

and in victory attain my end.



from Bennett, Arthur. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



A prayer by Thomas Merton



**My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.**

**And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.**

**I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.**

“The Merton Prayer” from *Thoughts in Solitude* 1956, 1958 by The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Find a prayer of transformation

Find another prayer of transformation and bring it to share with the group!

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection



Your prayer of transformation

Spend some time writing your own prayer of transformation. You could do this individually or as a group.

To consider

1. What passages from the Bible reflect similar ideas found in this prayer?
2. Are there ideas or concepts in this prayer that resonate with you?
3. How can this prayer help us grow in faith and be transformed?

Space for reflection