



# PRAY 2012



*If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. 2 Chr. 7:14*

If my people will pray, God said, If my people will pray; I will hear them, I will forgive them, and I will heal their land. What a promise! What a future we have, if we will humble ourselves and pray!

In the Bible God spoke these words to King Solomon on the night that he and all of Israel dedicated the great temple in Jerusalem to the LORD. And that night God made it clear that he longs for his people to pray. For that night God also made this great promise, *“My eyes will always be open and my ears always attentive to the prayers offered in this place”*. That place was the temple, but the temple didn’t last. God’s people rebelled, stopped praying and lost their land. But we know the story doesn’t stop there. He sent His Son Jesus to save us, and Jesus sent his Spirit to remain with us, and the Bible says – are you ready for this - the Bible says that you and I, we are the temple of God now, we are the dwelling place of God, we are the place that God has consecrate; where he lives, where he listens and watches over us. How much more will God answer our prayers now that he dwells in us! All we have to do is obey. All we have to do is PRAY!

*And pray we will...*

This year at Heron Park we are launching a year-long prayer ministry to encourage us, challenge us and teach us how to humble ourselves and pray. For we believe that God’s word is as true today as it was 2000 years ago, and we believe that if his people, who are called by his name at Heron Park Baptist Church will humble themselves and seek his face, and turn from our sins, then God will forgive, God will heal, and God will restore our lives to Him and to one another.

So join us this year, all year, as we pray together, grow together and trust God for great things in the congregation and lives of his church at Heron Park.

Pastor Dan Clark

## PRAYER

*“Those persons who know the deep peace of God, the unfathomable peace that passes all understanding, are always men and women of much prayer.”*

*R. A. Torrey*

*“Don’t pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees.” ~ Corrie ten Boom*

*“You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living Christian that does not pray.” Matthew Henry*

*“Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.” John Bunyan*

*“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on our difficulties.”  
Oswald Chambers*

*Prayer is no easy matter. It demands a relationship in which you allow God to enter into the very centre of your being, to see there what you would rather leave in darkness, and to touch there what you would rather leave untouched.*

*Henri Nouwen*

*There is no greater intimacy with another person than that which is build through holding him or her up in prayer. Douglas Steere*

Welcome fellow traveler, to our year-long prayer journey. A journey that we will travel on together with the help of this guide book. So before we begin, let's take some time to understand how this prayer journey works. The following is brief summary of this guide book:

## **Monthly Prayer Pages**

For each month you will find two prayer pages. The first page explains the prayer theme for the month and any special prayer events that might be happening at the church. It includes a small teaching on the prayer theme for that month, and will give general information to help you understand one specific way of praying.

The second page for each month offers information on how to pray the specific type of prayer that we are practicing that month. Think about this booklet as a type of prayer journey that you will take, which means we will be moving through prayer the way a pilgrim might journey to a holy place. Each month we will be practicing a different type of prayer, and often you will be given a prayer challenge to practice. Yes, believe it or not, prayer needs to be practiced, in fact, it's considered a spiritual discipline or exercise. So get ready for a work out!

You will also find a resource of Bible verses and passages about prayer at the end of the guide. Please use this resource throughout the year to grow your understanding of prayer in the Bible.

You will also find several blank pages at the back to write down ideas or experiences that you have while you journey through your prayer guide.

## **Make a Commitment**

As with everything else that is worthwhile, prayer demands commitment. And you will only get out of it what you put in. So we encourage everyone to make a real commitment to prayer this year and to prayer with us, using this prayer guide – which is a great way to find support and structure in your prayer life. And as we journey together we believe that God will build up the unity of His Church, and do great things in our congregation.

# PRAY JANUARY

*Come let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord our maker. Psalm 95:6*

As we begin our prayer journey together, let us begin with prayers that give adoration and praise to God. Let us begin with worship, let us begin with HIM. After all, prayer isn't just about us asking for things, it's about a relationship, a conversation with God, in which we grow to know Him better, and in return, He grants us His grace and favour. So as we begin the New Year, we will spend the month of January praying prayers of Adoration. Remember, it was Jesus who taught us that when we worship Him we must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), with all of our heart, soul and mind. When we do this, we can't help but begin our worship with adoration.

Adoration, for some may be difficult, as we are used to praying and asking for things or giving thanks. Adoration is not the same as these; it is simply worshiping God and speaking out to Him just how wonderful He is. Psalm 145 is a perfect psalm to lead us into prayers of adoration, the first five verses are listed below, why not recite this psalm everyday this month!

*I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. Psalm 145:1-5*

## **Special night of Worship and Adoration:**

January is the month of Epiphany, the month when we remember the Magi and their gifts, which represents the whole world worshiping Jesus Christ. In honour of this we will host a special night of praise and adoration on Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 pm. Join us and begin the year right, begin the year as a worshiper of the Most High God!

# PRAYER OF ADORATION

As Baptists, and Protestants, we often find ourselves detached from many of the great Church traditions. This is mostly because we do not practice a structured liturgy during our worship services, instead we chose to worship more freely, because of this we sometimes miss out on some great worship tools available to the church. The following prayer of Adoration, which is referred to by many churches as the **Great Doxology**, is one of the oldest Christian prayers in the world. This month why not try praying this prayer once very day, and see if your thoughts are not drawn more to God as you practice adoring Him for who He is. Also this month why not make a list, or practice a mental exercise of thinking about God's attributes (His love, mercy, faithfulness, kindness, etc.) and pray His attributes back to Him declaring who He is in your life. This January, let's worship God, and adore the one who gives us eternal life and freedom in Christ!

## The Great Doxology

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,

we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

# PRAY FEBRUARY

February is cold, and dark, and most of us can't wait for spring to arrive. What a perfect time to give thanks! This month as we continue our prayer journey together let's spend our time giving thanks to God, because there is nothing that will warm up February like a glad and thankful heart. This month we will be giving thanks in every worship service, which will include scriptures, testimonies, and prayers of thanksgiving.

One of the most powerful images of thanksgiving in the Bible is found in the book of Job. Job has lost everything, and he has just been informed that his children are all dead. Upon hearing this, he falls to the ground and utters these profound words...*"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."* Job 1:21

In the middle of all this tragedy, Job engaged in the ancient practice of covering one's self with ashes. This was done when someone was mourning as a way to remind themselves, and others, of the judgement that God made upon mankind when we sinned – "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Job is reminding us that no matter how bad life gets, as long as we have breath to breathe we can offer blessing and thanksgiving to God because we are nothing without Him, literally just dirt.

In order to really set this truth in our hearts, and teach ourselves to be thankful in all things, this year we are going to host an Ash Wednesday Service to begin the season of Lent. This will be a Baptist service, but we will use the imagery found in more traditional churches to teach us that in all things, good, bad, and otherwise, we must raise our voices and give thanks to God, for He made us out of the dust of the ground, and created in us the gift of life.

Join us on Wednesday, February 22 for a special Ash Wednesday Thanksgiving service, a service that will remind us of all we have to be thankful for, and just how far God has brought us.

# PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

This month we want to exercise our thankfulness. And by “exercise” we mean to work out prayers of thanksgiving for things that we would not normally be thankful for. And like exercise, it will be hard work, but it will make us stronger, and more like Christ. So please take the thanksgiving challenge, alone, or with your whole family, and every time you feel a complaint coming on, turn it into thanksgiving!

## **The Thanksgiving Challenge:**

For the month of February, every time you want to complain, every time something annoys or upsets you, make a conscience decision to give thanks. And do it out loud when you can. It might look like this:

- Someone cuts you off: thank God, not just for your safety but for the person who cut you off, and ask God to bless them.
- Someone upsets you at work: thank God for them, and find a way to say something to them that will bless them.
- Plans don't work out: thank God for the road block, and for His sovereignty over your plans

Here are a few verses to help with your thankfulness; why not read them every day.

***Psalm 136:2-3*** - Give thanks to the God of gods. His faithful love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His faithful love endures forever.

***1 Chronicles 16:8-9*** - Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his miracles.

***Colossians 1:3*** - We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Ephesians 5:20*** - And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Revelation 11:17*** - And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign.

# PRAY MARCH

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His Word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10*

This year, we have begun our prayer journey with prayers of adoration and thanksgiving; we have worshiped God, come before Him with thanksgiving, and focused our prayers on who He is. Now it's time to talk to God about us. Now we must present ourselves to Him and seek His favour and grace. We cannot do this unless we first seek His forgiveness, so this month we will focus our prayers on repentance.

As the season of lent draws to a close at the end of March, there is no better way to prepare ourselves for the Holy Week than to present ourselves before God with a humble and contrite heart. We must soul search, and honestly consider our sinfulness, and our need for God's continual grace.

To accommodate this attitude as a church community, we will be hosting special "**Letters in the Sand**" services on Sunday March 25 and Wednesday March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm. During these services we will have opportunity to write out our sins in a small sandbox and then, after praying and asking God forgiveness, we can just wipe them away - FORGIVEN! These services are intended to bring us, like the adulterous woman in John 8 to the feet of Jesus, who, at that moment, wrote something in the sand. And after writing it, stood up and said, "Woman, where are they that accuse you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Join us on Sunday March 25<sup>th</sup> or Wednesday March 28<sup>th</sup> and find the forgiveness you need, the forgiveness that only God can give. Join us, and be set free!

# PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Many Christians do not feel forgiven. They attend church, they pray, and “ask” for forgiveness, but they still live guilt-ridden, defeated lives. They are unable to break free from habitual sin, they never feel “worthy” and they often live out very private discouraged lives. This should not be! As a people who believe that God forgives all sin and gives us the power to live transformed lives, we of all people should find freedom from guilt, condemnation, and self-loathing. This month, we must practice a number of prayer steps that teach us how to live repentant and Godly lives, free from guilt and endless discouragement. This will take courage and vulnerability, but if we are willing to take these steps, we can gain the potential to live in the freedom that Christ has already given to us.

## **Prayer Steps to True Repentance and Freedom:**

1. Confess your sins to God.
2. Talk to someone you trust about your sinfulness (your pastor, a close friend – someone who loves you and will not judge you, and who trusts you and would also ask you to pray for them. You don’t have to give details but sharing and making ourselves accountable to others a real part of confession. “confess your sins one to another,” James 5:16.
3. Courageously identify temptations that cause you to stumble and make a plan, preferably with the person you trust, to guard against these temptations.
4. Pray alone, but out loud, and name your sin and temptation to God. When we hear our sin spoken we hear how terrible it is and we become more aware of our need to repent.
5. Finally, and this is difficult to do. Ask others that you trust to share with you about any sinful behaviour that they see in you – (pride, envy, anger, bitterness, gossip, etc). Be brave, and listen carefully to others, because we often have a great deal of difficulty facing the truth about ourselves, this is why Jesus reminded us to remove the plank in our own eye before we speak of the sliver in someone else’s.

Repentance is much more than a moment of confession; it’s a way of life. This month, focus on repentance, pray for God to give you strength, and you will find a new freedom in Jesus Christ.

# PRAY APRIL

## ***Christ has Risen, He has risen indeed!***

The month of April is a month of renewal and life! The spring is here, and we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. And in the power of His resurrection we can come boldly before His throne and bring our requests and petitions. So during this month of life and hope, let us come before the Lord and King of the Universe and ask him to meet our needs and grant us our requests in His will.

This year our Holy Week services will include a special time of prayer in which we will take requests on small pieces of paper. Each night we will collect the prayer requests and pray over them. If you have a special need, please join us for any or all of our services during Holy Week and receive prayer for your needs. We will also take time to receive any special requests you might have for someone else. So please bring your prayer requests to church during Holy Week and expect great things from God.

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. 1 Tim 2:1*

## **Praying for Each other at Heron Park:**

This month we would like to challenge the entire congregation to pray for each other. Here's a great way to do it. Find your name in the phone directory and pray for everyone else on that page. If you don't know them, consider calling them and introducing yourself to them. What a great Easter season we can have if we all pray for each other. And if you don't know what to pray for, here are some ideas:

- Heath and peace for the home
- Provision and employment
- Unity in family relationships
- Personal health for each individual
- That God would use each person for his glory



# PRAY MAY

*My eyes anticipate the night watches,  
That I may meditate on Your Word. Psalm 119:148*

From the beginning of the Christian faith, men and women have been praying the Scriptures back to God. It's a way of praying when we don't know what to pray for, and it's a way of connecting with God by making His words your own as you pray them. This month we will focus on praying the Bible through the ancient prayer method of **Lectio Divina**. We will be holding two special prayer services in which we will meditate on a specific passage of Scripture and wait on God asking Him to speak to us through His Word. When praying in this way we simply read a passage of scripture, meditate on it, read it again, mediate again, and then we read it one final time and wait quietly and ask God to reveal anything in the passage that He wants to speak into our hearts.

Many people who experience this type of prayer for the first time are amazed at how peaceful it leaves them. They also realize how difficult it is to quiet our minds and focus for a prolonged period of time on the Word of God. Please join us for this unique prayer meeting, and come expecting to hear God speak to you!

If you cannot join us, try following these simple instructions as you pray the psalms:

- Before you read the text, take a moment to settle your mind and spirit and just be still – don't rush into the reading, take a few deep breaths.
- Read it once and spend 5 minutes thinking about it.
- Read it again and pray about anything that the text brings to your mind.
- Read it one more time and if anything stands out to you, think about that part as much as you can for that day, and see if God speaks to you through His word as you go about your day.

**Lectio Divina Prayer Services:**

**Sunday, May 6, at 7:00 pm, Wednesday, May 9 at 7:30 pm**

# PRAYING THE PSALMS

Do you like to pray at night or in the morning? Most people have a preference for prayer time. The best habit is to do both, but often we are tired or unable to think of much to pray for, so in the month of May we will practice praying the Psalms. Each day we will pray a different psalm and you can pray it in the morning, or at night, or both. The list of psalms below is offered so that our whole congregation can be praying the same scriptures at once. Join in! It will take you five minutes a day, and it will make you day five hundred times better!

If you can make the time, try praying these Psalms with the *lectio divina* exercise on the previous page, read them slowly, pause, reflect, and let God say something to you from his word.

May 1	Psalm 1	May 17	Psalm 91
May 2	Psalm 8	May 18	Psalm 100
May 3	Psalm 19	May 19	Psalm 103
May 4	Psalm 20	May 20	Psalm 111
May 5	Psalm 23	May 21	Psalm 119:1-24
May 6	Psalm 24	May 22	Psalm 119:25-48
May 7	Psalm 27	May 23	Psalm 119:49-72
May 8	Psalm 30	May 24	Psalm 119:73-96
May 9	Psalm 42	May 25	Psalm 119:97-120
May 10	Psalm 46	May 26	Psalm 119:121-144
May 11	Psalm 51	May 27	Psalm 119:145-176
May 12	Psalm 54	May 28	Psalm 121
May 13	Psalm 67	May 29	Psalm 139
May 14	Psalm 83	May 30	Psalm 148,149,150
May 15	Psalm 85	May 31	Psalm 23
May 16	Psalm 23		

# PRAY JUNE

*And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth,  
he began to cry out and say,  
“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”  
Mark 10:47*

*“The tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven,  
but beat his breast and said,  
‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’  
Luke 18:13*

These two prayers, one from a blind man and the other from a tax collector are considered by many to be the purest of all prayers in the Bible. In the first instance, Jesus heard the blind man and healed him and in the second, Jesus said that the tax collector went home “justified” before God because of his humility. The simplicity and humility of these prayers can teach us something profound about our own prayer lives – we don’t need long prayers, or eloquent prayers, we need honest prayers.

For almost 2000 years during the history of Christianity, the church, in one way or another has practiced praying a simple prayer based on the prayers of these two men in the Bible. Not only has it helped people to pray, because of its simplicity, but it has also helped some to pray without ceasing, as Paul tells us to do in 1 Thess. 5:17. Because the prayer is prayed in rhythm with one’s breath, it becomes a prayer we can say with great frequency and with beautiful simplicity.

This prayer, called the Jesus prayer, is written below, and the opposite page teaches us how to pray it effectively. When praying this prayer, do not think of it like a formula, or magic phrase, think of it as a constant reminder of who we are, who Jesus Christ is, and what He has done for us, and let the prayer lead you into a constant awareness of God’s love for you. Here is the prayer that has been prayed for thousands of years by Christians all around the world:

***Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
have mercy on me, a sinner.***

# THE JESUS PRAYER

The Jesus prayer, which is made up of the simple statement, “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*” It is intended to be a rhythm prayer, or a prayer of repetition. It is also called a breath prayer because the ancient Christians would repeat it as they breathed. It works like this:

As we breathe in, we whisper – ***Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.***

And as we breathe out, we whisper – ***Have mercy on me, a sinner.***

Does this seem weird to you? Believe it or not Christians have been practicing this prayer for centuries. The benefits are enormous:

1. It helps you pray without ceasing – as Paul tells us to in 1 Thess. 5:17
2. It helps you keep God’s word in your heart, as David did.
3. It helps you meditate on God.
4. It allows you to praise God with your breath – as the psalmist said, “Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord!

On a personal note, I have been practicing this prayer for many years, I say it often and I often begin my prayer time with this prayer, and after a few minutes God begins to direct my thoughts and prayers to other things I need to pray about.

Even if this prayer seems strange to you, give it a try, and give it some time, for there is no better way to approach the God of the universe than by stating our sinfulness and His mercy – it is truly the perfect starting point for our prayer life with God.

This month, pray the Jesus Prayer as often as you can. At work, on your way to work, when you are doing the dishes, or when you are resting in your bed before you go to sleep. Just practice saying it quietly and regularly, and you will be amazed how often your thoughts turn to God during the day. And when our thoughts turn to God we become more at peace, more calm, and more willing to see God at work in our lives.

# PRAY JULY

July is the seventh month of the year, and in the Bible the seventh of anything was always synonymous with rest. As we reach the middle of our prayer journey together let's take the month of July to rest from organized prayer. Let's just pray when and how we want, and not too often! Let's pray simple prayers giving thanks for the weather, the holidays, (if you are taking holidays this summer) and as we enjoy July, let's take a Sabbath rest from prayer.

Now by that, we don't mean stop praying, rather, we mean, let prayer come when it does, don't be organized. If you pray every morning or every night, take a holiday this month and rest. Don't worry, you won't lose your habit as long as you understand you are taking a Sabbath rest from your prayer routine. Why a Sabbath rest? Consider the following:

1. Rest is a vital part of the rhythms of life, without it we cannot be healthy
2. Rest is ordained and commanded by God, if we don't rest from our work or our regular routine, we are living in disobedience to Him.
3. Rest renews that which is rested. Like our bodies, or a farmer's field, things that are given time to rest work better. By resting our prayer routine we allow God to shape it as we start up after the time of rest and we often find it revitalized and modified as God leads us into a new season of prayer.
4. Rest reminds us that we are not so important that we cannot stop. This is the great sin of our culture; we go, go, go; because we NEED to be busy. Being busy is more important to us than being healthy, and it is what our culture honours – but God is not our culture. We cannot impress God with constant work, constant worship or constant prayer – we need rest, He knows it, our bodies and spirit know it, so let's get our brains on board and this July let's get some rest!

This month there will be no extra services for prayer, instead, sit quietly, go for a walk, or just relax the way you love to relax and let true Sabbath rest settle in your soul.

# SABBATH REST

During this month of Sabbath rest, consider the following Bible verses and how they teach us about rest. Just read them often, if not every day, and perhaps you can pick a favourite verse to memorise and say to yourself as you take real time to rest. And remember, refusing to rest on a regular basis is a much a sin as lying, stealing or anything else because refusing to rest is an act of disobedience to God and a signal to Him that we are somehow better than He. After all, God rested, what makes us think we can live without rest? When it comes to prayer, resting our prayers does not mean resting our relationship with God. In fact, by resting OUR prayers, we may just be quiet enough to hear God talk to us. So rest this month and listen for God's voice, because it often comes "still and small," and the busy person often misses it.

*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Gen 2:2-3*

*"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exod. 20:8-11*

*Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. Psalm 62:1-2*

*This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. Isaiah 30:15*

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matt 11:28-29*

# PRAY AUGUST

*“If the only prayer you say in your entire life is ‘Thank You, that would suffice.’ - Meister Eckhart*

The Prayer of Examen is a daily spiritual exercise typically credited to St. Ignatius of Loyola [1491-1556], who encouraged fellow followers to engage in the practice for developing a deeper level of spiritual sensitivity and for recognizing and receiving the assistance of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of this practice is the idea of becoming more aware of God’s presence and the Holy Spirit’s movement throughout your day.

The Prayer of Examen is primarily an exercise in remembering. One is invited to concentrate on experiences and encounters from the past 24 hours. The experience doesn’t need to be of a certain length—as little as ten minutes could be sufficient, and you could spend more time on certain portions compared to others. It might be helpful to journal your thoughts and recollections or to write out what you notice during your times of prayer. Consider sharing your experiences: allow encouragement and insight from others to influence you and cheer you on, and when appropriate give the same, together striving to be an ever-faithful “community of solitudes”.

In the fall of 2011 pastor Dan reminded us of a story from the Old Testament where Samuel “raised an Ebenezer,” and we recognized that few of us knew what that meant. But pastor Dan taught us that the word Ebenezer means “God is my help,” and what Samuel was doing was stopping on his journey and taking a moment to look back and say God has been my help, and he will continue to be my help until I arrive safely home. The prayer of Examen is like an Ebenezer – you stop, look back, give thanks, and then move on.

During the month of August we will take time on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights to pray the prayer of Examen. As we begin each service we will ask for 5 minutes of silence in the sanctuary while we reflect on the day and week that has passed. Notes on the Video Screen will guide this quiet time and as we conclude the prayer and begin the service we will invite people to share a blessing or insight from the previous week. Then we will worship God and give Him thanks for His faithfulness in our lives.

# PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Begin this prayer by recognizing the presence of God. Remind yourself of God's presence with you and His desire to be with you. Consider praying for the Holy Spirit to help you be attentive to God's presence. To become more focused, it might be helpful to repeat a simple phrase during this time, like *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10), or *"The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."* (Psalm 145:18)

As you think about the past 24 hours, what causes you to be thankful? Look back over the past day, the big and small aspects of life, and recognize what reasons you have to be grateful. Focus on these experiences and encounters, helping your mind and spirit center on the goodness and generosity of God, and helps us find encouragement and reminders of God's goodness. As you remember the day, give God thanks.

By intentionally reviewing our interactions, responses, feelings and intentions, we can avoid letting days speed by. We can pause to learn more about ourselves and about God's activity in our lives. Try to look back objectively as you review. Rather than interpreting, justifying, or rationalizing, the intent is to observe and remember. Allow your mind to wander in the situations you've been in and to notice details. Then, ask yourselves these questions:

1. When or where in the past 24 hours were you cooperating most fully with God's action in your life?
2. When were you resisting?
3. What habits and life patterns do you notice from the past day?

Then, pray, thank God for His blessings, ask Him to change things in your life that need changing, and ask forgiveness for sins committed, and as you practice this prayer you will become increasing aware of God's hand in your life, and just how faithful He is!

*"Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul...Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."*  
*Psalm 143:8-10*

# PRAY SEPTEMBER

In September we are going to practice praying God's way, or that is to say we are going to pray the way our Lord taught us to pray – we are going to practice the Lord's Prayer. And as we do, you will be amazed at how wonderful that prayer is, and how it can lead you to pray for so many areas of your life.

Over the centuries the Lord's Prayer has been the most prayed prayer in all of Christianity. But often times, people pray it, or say it, without thinking about it. During the month of September Pastor Dan will be preaching a message entitled – "Pray It like You Mean It," and you will hear the Lord's Prayer like you never heard it before! We will also be praying the Lord's Prayer in each service for this month and asking all parents to ensure that their children have this important prayer memorized.

One of the greatest teachings on the Lord's Prayer comes from Martin Luther, the great German reformer, who was once asked by his barber, if Luther could teach him how to pray. Luther responded by writing a little book called, *A Simple Way To Pray.* In it, he encourages us to recite the Lord's Prayer slowly, and stop at every phrase. Once we stop, we are to think about what that phrase is saying and expand that phrase into our own prayer. It works like this:

**Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name** (stop). Lord I want to take time to adore you and bless you, and if I have not made your name holy in my life, help me to do so...etc.

**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven** (stop). Lord, I spend a great deal of my life building up my own kingdom, my work, my home, my family, and my interests. God teach me to step back and let you build up your kingdom in me, and help me to serve your kingdom.

Luther prayed this way all the time; he said it taught him to let God's word lead his prayer life. He would pray the psalms and other scriptures this way as well. So this month, try praying the Lord's Prayer slowly, and let it guide your whole prayer time, you might be amazed at what God brings to your mind through His Word.

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.**

When Moses approached God on Mount Sinai, he heard a voice saying, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus invites us to draw near to God who is beyond human understanding, who dwells in mystery, who is all holy, yet whom we can call God "our Father".

**Thy Kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

The Bible promises that God's kingdom will be marked by peace and justice. Good would be rewarded and evil punished. The kingdom, according to Jesus, is not far off, but already present in our midst, though not yet revealed. In the Lord's prayer we pray that God's kingdom come, that God's will, which is for our good, be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

All that we need, His hand provides, for the Bible says that all good things come from heaven.

**Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

This petition of the Lord's Prayer is a demanding one. Not only do we ask God's forgiveness for our daily offenses, but we link God's forgiveness of us with our forgiveness of others. Forgiving others is not always easy to do. We need God's help to do it. But it must be done if we expect to receive God's mercy.

**And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

Life is not easy. It is a daily battle. Trials like sickness and failure can crush our spirits. False values and easy promises can entice us and even destroy our souls. And so we ask God to keep us from failing when we are tested, to help us to know the right thing to do, to deliver us from the evil which awaits us in life. Thus we pray the Lord's Prayer, and in it we find all we need.

# PRAY OCTOBER

As we reach the last part of our prayer journey for this year, let's consider one area of prayer that is not typical for those of us who worship in Baptist churches – body prayers and prayer postures. Don't be afraid, such prayers have been offered up to God since the book of Genesis, and the reasons we don't engage in this way of praying says more about our traditions than it does our faith. So let's go on a real adventure in our prayer journey this month – don't be afraid, trust God and you may revitalize your prayers in a way you never imagined.

The Bible encourages us to pray with our bodies. We are to raise our hands, bend our knees, prostrate our bodies, and to stand in prayer often. In short, our bodies are as much a part of a healthy prayer life as our minds and voices are. So this month, let's practice praying with our bodies. And if you have never done this before, don't be afraid, it's clearly taught in scripture. Consider the following:

- *Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, **lifting up holy hands** without anger or disputing. 1 Tim 2:8*
- *Come, let us **bow down** in worship, let us **kneel** before the LORD our Maker; Psalm 95:6*
- *While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, **he fell with his face to the ground** and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. Luke 5:12-13*

Body prayers not only help us to pray, but they teach us humility. At this point in our prayer journey, we need remind ourselves that it's not about us, it's about Him. We come to Him in prayer – the God and LORD of the universe, bowing, kneeling, and falling before is more than appropriate. This month we will hold a unique prayer meeting in which we will allow for specific body prayers to happen. We will kneel, stand, raise our hands, and maybe even prostrate ourselves before God. So join us for this very special prayer service, and get your body into "prayer" shape!

# PRAYER POSTURES

Here is a simple guide to prayer postures (pastor Dan and pastor Greg will be teaching more about these in worship this month). Your challenge for this month is to try all of them, and just so you know – the one prayer posture that is not recommended or practiced in the Bible is the one we most often do – sitting down. Nowhere in the Bible will you find someone sitting to pray – that would be disrespectful and quite frankly, considered lazy! So don't be a prayer potato, get up, or get down, and let's teach our bodies to pray!

**Standing:** Standing is the most common form of prayer, it teaches us that we are in the presence of the King, and should show him honour and respect.

**Kneeling:** Kneeling is the second most common prayer posture, it teaches us that we should come to God in humility and it reminds us that we are not His equals, He created us, He redeemed us, and we owe Him our lives.

**Prostration:** Prostration can be scary or embarrassing for some, it's an act of great humility and vulnerability. If you try this, always lay face down out of reverence for God. This is often seen in the Bible, as many people who presented themselves before God and Christ would fall before Him out of reverence and respect.

**Uplifted Hands:** This is often done in conjunction with standing to pray, it signifies an act of worship and openness to God's work in our lives, as if we are reaching up to Him and asking Him to bless us.

**Sign of the cross:** This body prayer is not something that we Baptist's do, in fact if you grew up in the middle of last century you were told not to do this as it was something only Catholics did – not true. In fact, we have records from the first century, long before the formation of the Roman Catholic Church, in which Christians were signing the cross on their bodies as a way of consecrating themselves to Christ. So if you wish, this month try the sign of the cross, and as you do it, ask God to protect you and keep you safe throughout the day.

# PRAY NOVEMBER

*The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. Lamentations 3:25-26*

The hardest thing you will ever do is be quiet. That's because being quiet is much more than not talking, being quiet is being still both in body and mind. It is the settling of your mind so that your mind is not racing through the worries and concerns of the day. Being quiet is an act of intentional submission before God so that you can hear His voice, and stop all those endless conversations that you have with yourself every day. Being quiet takes practice, because your brain will not want to stop long enough to let you listen for the voice of God, in fact, when you first practice this type of prayer, you will find yourself endlessly frustrated at how often your mind wanders away from God and back to the worries or plans of the day. But don't give up, for God most often talks to us through a *"still, small voice,"* bringing guidance, comfort and assurance – it's up to us to learn to listen and hear that divine voice in our lives.

The most difficult idea for us as Baptists, after we have practiced silence, is to think of silence as prayer. We want to talk when we pray, and sitting in silence can be somewhat uncomfortable. But silence is as much a prayer as lots of talking. In fact, silence can be more beneficial than talking because it gives us a chance to hear how distracted and confused our minds are. While silent you will hear your mind thinking, and this can be unpleasant when you realise that your thought life has no discipline at all.

Then, as you continue in your silence you begin to hear God talking to you. Maybe your mind wanders to something you are worried about, and you hear the Word of God in your mind say – do not worry about tomorrow; or you feel pain in your body and you hear the Word of God in your mind say – I am the God that Heals you. You have said nothing, but God is taking your thoughts and speaking to you as you quietly listen!

This month we will try this together in a special **Silence in the Sanctuary** service on Sunday November 25, when we will come together to pray and listen silently for God.

# SILENCE & SOLITUDE

*A Christian's greatest temptation is towards too many words. They weaken our faith and make us lukewarm. But silence is a sacred discipline, a guard of the Holy Spirit. – Henri Nouwen.*

You probably talk too much! We all talk too much! And talking, the Bible says, is the easiest way to sin. Consider What James had to say about the tongue:

*The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. James 3:6-8*

Think about it, lying, boasting, gossiping, flattering, etc., these are the things that we human beings do all the time. But if we are become true prayers, we will need to silence our tongues. And, when possible, silence the world around us.

This month we want to experience true silence and solitude, there are a few things we need to consider:

1. Plan ahead and block off at least three hours or as much as a whole day to be alone.
2. If you can, plan to be somewhere that you will not be disturbed, if you cannot leave your home, then turn off the phone, computer etc. (for some, this will be hard to do, and thus it will tell you how much you need to talk and communicate all the time.)
3. Spend your time reading the Bible, going for a walk or just resting, but remember no speaking, no communication, and no media.
4. When you conclude your time, take a few moments to worship God, and pray out loud. And think about how it felt to be consciously silent before God.

# PRAY DECEMBER

Keep yourself a stranger and pilgrim upon this earth, for here you have no abiding home. Keep your heart free and lifted up to God. – Thomas Kempis

The people of God are a wandering people. Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the people Israel, the prophets who often had to flee for their lives, Jesus whose ministry was a constant journey culminating in His journey to Galilee, and Paul, who's decision it was to wander this earth with the good news, all exemplify the notion that we Christians are not quite at home on this earth – not yet anyway. They were all on a journey that would lead them to a heavenly city, as the writers of Hebrews puts it:

*These people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Heb 11:13-16)*

During the month of December, let us end our year of prayer thinking of ourselves as pilgrims, people on a journey. And what better month to think this way – the month of Advent, when the people of God, living as aliens in a foreign land were wandering and waiting for the messiah, and when He came a precious few made the journey to see Him face to face.

This December, let's journey with the Shepherds, and the Magi, lets journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and then to Egypt, and lets discover the pilgrim in each of us, who is certain that they are not quite home yet, and who is on a journey to meet the Lord Jesus face to face.

To end our year of prayer with a special celebration the pastors and elders of the church would like to invite you to join them for an evening of pilgrimage on Saturday December 15<sup>th</sup>, when we will journey to several home-sites in our neighbourhood and re-enact the journeys taken by Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and the Magi, we will then conclude our pilgrimage at the church for a time of prayer and refreshments.

# A PILGRIM'S PRAYER

O God, whose voice called Abraham from his home, call us.

O LORD, who sent Moses from a burning bush, send us.

O Father, who guided the Hebrews with cloud and fire, guide us.

O Spirit, who provided the wondering prophet with food, feed us.

O Saviour, who walked this earth, walk with us.

O King, who left your heavenly throne, enthrone yourself in our hearts.

Lead us home, safely home, to rest with you forever. Amen

Prayer and pilgrimages go hand in hand, after all, we are pilgrims journeying home to one day meet our Lord. Our lives then, must be filled with prayer; prayer for guidance, prayer for safety, prayer for strength, and prayer for grace, grace that will guide and lead us home.

As we conclude our prayer journey for this year, take time this month to look back through this prayer guide. And like a pilgrim, stop on the pages that most inspired you to pray. Re-do those pages as if you were journeying back to a sacred place, and trust that God will meet you on way.

And if life seems difficult to bear, consider the story of one lonely wanderer in the book of Genesis. Hagar was an Egyptian slave who belonged to Sarah and Abraham, after doubting God, Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham as a wife, but when Hagar conceived Sarah became angry with her and abused her. So Hagar ran away and found herself alone sitting at a well in the desert. And at that well, God came to her, blessed her and promised to give her a great heritage. He then told her to call her son Ishmael, which means, "God hears me." Hagar then names God, and calls Him *El-roi*, which means "God sees me."

Now think about it, as we end one year and begin another, think about a tiny story, at the beginning of the Bible where an abused slave finds herself alone lost and wondering. And remember that, like Hagar, God always hears us, and God always sees us. So journey on, into the new year, and journey on in prayer, drawing ever closer to the God who sees you, the God who knows you, and the God who will bring you safely home.

## **Prayer in the Bible:**

The following verses can be used throughout the year to encourage and help you in your prayer life. Read them often!

### **Jesus' Teaching of Prayer:**

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:5-8).

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted'" (Luke 18:9-14).

"'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins'" (Mark 11:22-25).

## **Scriptures that Encourage us to Pray:**

"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

"...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8:26).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

## **Scriptures that Explain why our Prayers may go unanswered:**

"The LORD is far from the wicked: but he hears the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29).

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: for your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:15).

"He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

And they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts has sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 7:12-13).

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof" (Proverbs 1:28-30).

"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

## Three Great Prayers of the Bible:

### **The Priestly Prayer of our Lord Jesus: (John 17)**

*Father, the time has come for you to bring glory to your Son, in order that he may bring glory to you. And you gave him power over all people, so that he would give eternal life to everyone you give him. Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent. I have brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you gave me to do. Now, Father, give me back the glory that I had with you before the world was created.*

*You have given me some followers from this world, and I have shown them what you are like. They were yours, but you gave them to me, and they have obeyed you. They know that you gave me everything I have. I told my followers what you told me, and they accepted it. They know that I came from you, and they believe that you are the one who sent me. I am praying for them, but not for those who belong to this world. [a] My followers belong to you, and I am praying for them. All that I have is yours, and all that you have is mine, and they will bring glory to me. Holy Father, I am no longer in the world. I am coming to you, but my followers are still in the world. So keep them safe by the power of the name that you have given me. Then they will be one with each other, just as you and I are one. While I was with them, I kept them safe by the power you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost, except the one who had to be lost. This happened so that what the Scriptures say would come true.*

*I am on my way to you. But I say these things while I am still in the world, so that my followers will have the same complete joy that I do. I have told them your message. But the people of this world hate them, because they don't belong to this world, just as I don't.*

*Father, I don't ask you to take my followers out of the world, but keep them safe from the evil one. They don't belong to this world, and neither do I. Your word is the truth. So let this truth make them completely yours. I am sending them into the world, just as you sent me. I have given myself completely for their sake, so that they may belong completely to the truth.*

*I am not praying just for these followers. I am also praying for everyone else who will have faith because of what my followers will say about me. I want all of them to be one with each other, just as I am one with you and you are one with me. I also want them to be one with us. Then the people of this world will believe that you sent me.*

*I have honored my followers in the same way that you honored me, in order that they may be one with each other, just as we are one. I am one with them, and you are one with me, so that they may become completely one. Then this world's people will know that you sent me. They will know that you love my followers as much as you love me.*

*Father, I want everyone you have given me to be with me, wherever I am. Then they will see the glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the world was created. Good Father, the people of this world don't know you. But I know you, and my followers know that you sent me. I told them what you are like, and I will tell them even more. Then the love that you have for me will become part of them, and I will be one with them.*

#### **David's Prayer of Repentance:**

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.*

*Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*

*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.*

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

*Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom  
in that secret place.*

*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter  
than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed  
rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit,  
to sustain me.*

## **Paul's Prayer for the Church (Eph 3:14-21)**

*I kneel in prayer to the Father. All beings in heaven and on earth receive their life from him. God is wonderful and glorious. I pray that his Spirit will make you become strong followers and that Christ will live in your hearts because of your faith. Stand firm and be deeply rooted in his love. I pray that you and all of God's people will understand what is called wide or long or high or deep. I want you to know all about Christ's love, although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives will be filled with all that God is. I pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. His power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.*

## **Three Great Bible Prayers to Pray Every day:**

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen  
Matthew 6:9-13*

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

*Psalm 23*

*O God, have mercy on me, a sinner!  
Luke 18:13*