

# FORMING FAITH

LENTEN JOURNAL



**Isaiah 64:8**

*We are the clay, and you are our potter.  
All of us are the work of your hand.*

**“From its beginning, the church linked the desire for more of God to intentional practices, relationships and experiences that gave people space in their lives to “keep company” with Jesus. These intentional practices, relationships, and experiences we know as spiritual disciplines.” Adele Ahlberg Calhoun**

**But now, Lord, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand. Isaiah 64:8 CEB**



**Welcome to this Lenten Journal! At WHPC we will focus for the next 40 days upon those things that make space in our lives for God. This space becomes the arena for forming our faith and the source of our strength and hope.**

In the next few weeks, we will explore silence, simplicity, fasting, unplugging and prayer. Our goal with this journal is to help you make space in your day and week for new experiences and for time with God that transforms.

Each week has a theme or spiritual practice. On Sunday, a sermon will introduce the practice. Then this journal invites you to try a different experience each day of the following week. There are five experiences per week – some involve writing and reading, while others are an event that you reflect upon. Do as much or as little as you like but take time to consider the importance of each week’s theme and the areas of your life that need more space for God’s handiwork.

Ultimately, God is always at work in our lives, molding us and transforming us into the vessels of grace and love that the world and the people we love need. This Lent, as we move toward the joy of Easter, let us allow space to be molded and formed in new ways, so that we become capable of far more than we ever dreamt or imagined. Be on the lookout for weekly posts about these practices on the WHPC Facebook page, where you can comment with your thoughts and experiences.

God bless your Lenten Journey!

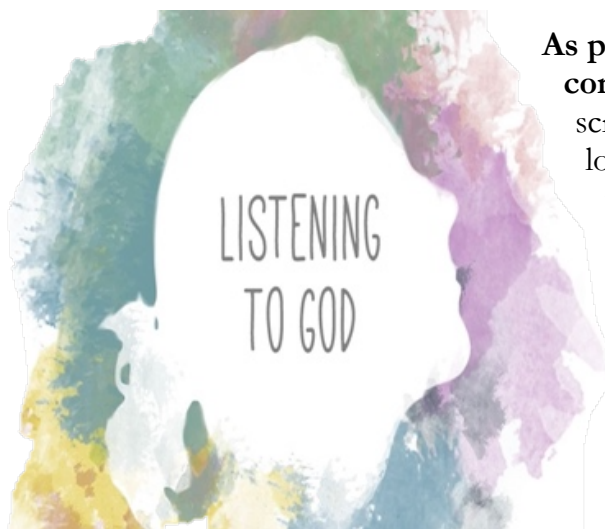
## Week One – Forming Faith and Listening

Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert.

Henry Nouwen, *Beloved*

Does the clay say to the one who fashions it “what are you making”? or “Your work has no handles?”

Isaiah 45:9b



**As people of faith, we believe that God continually speaks to us.** God speaks through scripture and study, through nature and those we love, through prophets of all kinds and even through a “still small voice” that comes in dreams and meditation. Unfortunately, the noise of our lives competes with God’s voice, and our listening skills can fail us or be underdeveloped.

This week you are invited to turn down the noise of your life, and to make space for God’s voice to speak. Schedule some quiet and solitude – even just a few minutes each day.

Listening is the first step in making space for God to draw close and to form us.

When Jesus told parables, he often ended his teaching with the phrase “**The one who has ears, let them hear.**” (Matthew 11:15) This week we will act intentionally, taking the time for our ears to be sharpened. We will practice listening in new ways so that God’s speech can mold us.

Be patient with yourself. You may have little experience with solitude or silence. It can feel strange and awkward as you begin. But trust that our Lord desires to “keep company” with you and will speak.

**Day One - Listen to Scripture**

**Read I Samuel 3:1-11**

How did Eli “perceive that the Lord was calling the boy”?

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How do you know when the Lord is calling someone?

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What is going on in your life that you long for the Lord to “speak into”?

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**Sit in silence for 5-10 minutes.**

Let this concern rise to your consciousness without anxiety or judgement.

**Journal Prayer...** In quiet sit and reflect and write what comes to your mind.

**“Speak Lord, your servant is listening. You know my concern. Help me to quiet my heart and hear your voice. Speak Lord, your servant is listening”**

*Maybe...*

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## Day Two - Listen to Music

**Pick some music** – preferably something that is moving and meaningful to you. Find a quiet place to listen where you won't be disturbed. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Let your mind empty and relax.

**When 5-10 minutes have gone by, open your eyes and pick up your pen.**

*My heart feels...*

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*Joy and strength come...*

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*I am grateful for...*

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### Day Three - Listen to Marj Thompson (Author and Teacher)

Listening is the first expression of communication...We know that listening precedes speaking in the development of children's language skills. The same order applies to the development of our prayer life. Something in our spirit is touched by the Divine Spirit before we are drawn to speak...God desires to be known and has many ways of communicating with us if we are willing to listen. The place to begin is with scripture...For some the most natural way to listen to God is through creation...We often hear God's voice through one another...The circumstances of our lives are another medium of God's communication with us...Many seekers have discovered that journal keeping can be a way of listening to oneself and to God...There are more subtle and mysterious ways in which we can hear God speak to us. They often come unbidden, amid ordinary activity or in the quiet of contemplation; a deep intuition, an acutely clear conviction, or a simple inner sense of how things are meant to be.

Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

**Read this quote. Close your eyes and remain quiet and open for 5-10 minutes. Open your eyes and pick up your pen.**

*Where do you most often listen for God?*

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*Where might you listen more intentionally for God?*

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#### **Journal a prayer**

*God come close and speak to me about...*

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## Day Four - Listen to Nature

**Pick a beautiful place outside to sit for 10-15 minutes.** Make sure it's quiet. Center yourself and take in the view and sounds and smells. Sit with your eyes and ears wide open but with your body still.

### Read from Psalm 19

1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

3 There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;

4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

*What is God's creation saying to you right now?*

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## Day Five – Listen with Elijah to the Still Small Voice

<sup>11</sup> And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: <sup>12</sup> And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. <sup>13</sup> And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

I Kings 19:13 KJV

**Read this passage slowly. Then sit in silence for five minutes. Repeat this process, closing your eyes in the silence. Open your eyes and pick up your pen.**

*In the stillness God I want to hear*

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*Speak to me about*

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## Week Two – Forming Faith and Unplugging

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place,  
and there he prayed. Mark 1:35

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared  
beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Without question our world holds a multitude of distractions. Our screens, our phones, our smart watches keep us connected 24/7 to music, video, and communications at a level we couldn't fathom a few decades ago. All this information fills our ears and eyes and souls.

Long before social media or email, God's people were instructed to "unplug" from the daily grind of distraction, noise, and

work. "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) is in fact the fourth of the ten commandments! For thousands of years, the faithful have practiced a rhythm of unplugging, or sabbath, believing it to be a good gift of God – a gift that allows space for delight and for God's presence.

In ancient times, sabbath revolved around the cessation of work. But in modern life, unplugging from technology in an intentional way needs consideration. For God to speak, convict, and change hearts, the large space occupied by digital input needs to diminish.

This week you are invited to unplug in several ways. Each experience will require you to disconnect from your phone and computer and make space for God to speak and work.

Try unplugging as much as you like, for as long as you can. God waits to surprise you and meet you in the space that will be created.



## Day One - Unplug with Scripture

### Read Mark 6:30-34

In the middle of Jesus' teaching and ministry he sends his disciples to "a secluded place" to "rest for a while."

*Do you imagine this an invitation or a command of Jesus? Why?*

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*How does compassion come in the way of Jesus getting his rest and solitude?*

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*Does this ever happen to you? How?*

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*What in your life needs rest? Where do you need to unplug? What might God be nudging you to consider here?*

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## Day Two – Unplug with Albert Palmer (Author)

There are always some people in the mountains who are known as “hikers.” They rush over the trail at high speed and take great delight in being the first to reach camp and in covering the greatest number of miles in the least possible time. They measure the trail in terms of speed and distance. John Muir, the founder of the Audubon Society once said: “People ought to saunter in the mountains – not hike! Do you know the origin of that word ‘saunter?’ It’s a beautiful word. In the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, ‘A la sainte terre,’ ‘To the Holy Land.’ And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not ‘hike’ through them...” Isn’t this a parable? There are people who “hike” through life. They measure life in terms of money and amusement; they rush along the trail of life feverishly seeking to make a dollar or gratify an appetite. How much better to “saunter” along this trail of life, to measure it in terms of beauty and love and friendship... to stop a while and let the beauty of the sunset possess the soul, to listen to what the trees are saying and the songs of the birds, and to gather the fragrant little flowers that bloom all along the trail of life for those who have eyes to see.

Albert W. Palmer, *Experiencing a Holy Walk*

**Read this passage slowly. Ask yourself these questions and then write a prayer.**

- Am I “hiking” or “sauntering” in my life right now?
- What would help me to see my life as Holy Land?
- How can I slow down and unplug?

Dear God,

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## Week Three – Forming Faith and Fasting

I have shadowed forth my intense longing to lose myself in the Eternal and become merely a lump of clay in the Potter's hands so that my service may become more certain because uninterrupted by the baser self in me. Mahatama Gandhi

Jesus answered, it is written one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:1-4



This week we turn to a practice that people of faith have entered into since the beginning of time to make space for God. Many religious traditions include fasting as an avenue for spiritual growth, or divine encounter. In general, fasting is simply the voluntary denial of something for a specific time, for a spiritual purpose. Jesus fasted and assumed that his followers would fast.

Christian communities have fasted throughout history for repentance, to intensify the life of prayer, for discernment or to free up financial resources for the poor.

In modern times, the desire to lose weight separates fasting from its spiritual significance, and the prevalence of eating disorders keeps many from teaching or pushing fasting as a spiritual discipline. But fasting is still a powerful way to make space for God to speak and work in our lives. This week you will be invited to fast in some manageable and unique ways that do not necessarily ask you to go hungry or without food. You will explore ways to voluntarily deny yourself something for a spiritual purpose. You may be surprised at the money, time, and energy we put into feeding ourselves and those we love. You will be invited to find other things in your life that take money, time, and energy away from what really matters.

Whatever you choose to do, be intentional. Make your goals manageable and within your ability. Most importantly, however and from whatever you fast, remember that this is for a spiritual purpose. The time, money, and energy you would have spent are to go to something that makes space for God. May you feel that holy movement in your life this week.

## Day One - Don't be a Hypocrite

### Read Matthew 6:16-18

The passage directly follows Jesus' instruction for prayer - what do you think is the connection between prayer and fasting?

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Are there times or ways that fasting (or other spiritual disciplines) may actually get in the way of being closer to God?

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Why do you think Jesus instructs to keep your fasting a secret?

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Fasting is often a way of preparing for the presence of the Lord - how might abstaining attune one to God's presence - or help us to see God's presence and activity in our lives and our relationships?

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## Day Two – Creating Space through Fasting

Fasting from food is not possible for everyone. It is not recommended for expectant mothers, or for people with certain medical conditions or a history of eating disorders. The ability to fast from food is a mark of privilege for those who have plenty, who are assured of having enough to eat when the time comes to break the fast. The spiritual desire to make space for God is possible to practice in other ways besides not eating.

Fasting creates space in our lives so that we can keep company with Jesus. Many Christians who fast from meals or media use the time that's been freed up to pray, read the Bible, and meditate on God's goodness. Fasting can transform us further into Christ's image because our deep desires are revealed when we fast, as well as our dependence on the item from which we are fasting.

**What is taking up more space and time in your life right now than you want it to? Social media? Watching television or movies? News? Junk food? Shopping? List a few.**

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**Choose one from your list, and circle it. Consider what portion of time you can fast from what you circled.** There are many options to plan a fast. It doesn't require you to cut out everything for a whole day or longer. Start with a few hours. Or consider fasting only on certain days of the week, fasting only during daylight hours, or fasting through a single meal or other recurring event each week. Choose a time period that will enable you to spend that time instead on something faith related.

*Going without enabled me to...*

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## Day Three – Fasting for Justice

### Read Isaiah 58:6-9

<sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the straps of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator<sup>[b]</sup> shall go before you;  
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

The prophet Isaiah tells about the type of fasting that pleases God. As you read these verses, underline what stands out to you. Then think about how you might use your fast to show solidarity with people who are hungry, homeless, or face other injustices.

*How can fasting increase our connection to those who are marginalized or oppressed?*

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*How might a fast loose the bonds of injustice, free the oppressed, or break every yoke?*

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## Day Four – Fasting as a simple meal or family gathering with prayer

You must certainly beware of just revising, not reducing, your pleasures. I mean, you can see some people searching out unusual liquors as a substitute for the usual wine ... and concocting delicacies ... which at other times they are ashamed to bother with. The result is that the observance of Lent means, not the repression of old lusts, but the occasion for new enjoyments ... Let your fasting be accompanied by frugality. St.

Augustine, Sermon on Lent

**(In other words, if you fast from eating meat during Lent, don't substitute fancy takeout vegan dumplings instead. Just eat something simple.)**

As a spiritual discipline, fasting helps us to keep company with Jesus. Fasting allows Christ to feed us – entering into our bones, our bloodstreams, our thinking, our decisions, and our leadership. As you plan to eliminate a meal or other distraction, consider how you will fill the time and empty space with a focus on God and others of God's children. Here are some ideas you might try:

- Experiment with a new form of prayer when you fast.
- Read Scripture or a devotional while you fast
- Find a partner with whom to fast. Plan together and compare notes.
- Fast with a small group or family group.
- Simplify a meal rather than skipping it.
- Break your fast with communion.

*How can you "feed on Jesus" in a way that gets into your bloodstream and thinking?*

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## Day Five - Fasting with Richard Foster (Author and Spiritual Director)

Fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface...Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ "all things hold together (Col 1:17). Therefore, in experiences of fasting, we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting! ... Fasting helps us keep our balance in life. How easily we begin to allow nonessentials to take precedence in our lives. How quickly we crave things we do not need until we are enslaved by them.

Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline

### Reflect on your experiences with fasting this week.

*During my fasting, I was surprised that...*

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*During my fasting, I was nourished by...*

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*During fasting, I was transformed toward...*

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### Prayer of Thanksgiving after Fasting

Lord, thank you for the lessons you taught me during fasting. Thank you for the ways you have nurtured my spirit. Guide me as I move forward. Help me to not forget this time of fasting, that I may honor and serve you with the choices that I make. Amen.

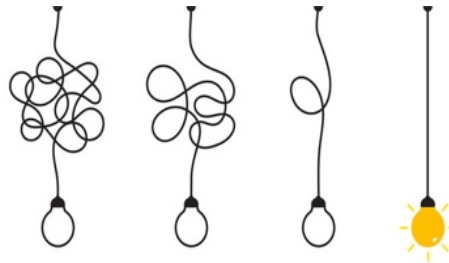
## Week Four – Forming Faith and Simplicity

A vessel is formed from a lump of clay with care, however, it is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful. Laozi 6th Century Daoist Monk

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.

Luke 16:13

It makes sense that as Americans we are obsessed with Marie Kondo and her “tidying” methods, and that “downsizing” is considered such a monumental, life-changing task. We are burdened with so much stuff! We own and manage and juggle so many things!



This week, we will explore Christian simplicity.

To simplify our lives as a Christian means to make space for God to transform us by removing the unimportant from our lives; focusing us on what truly matters. When we simplify our lives for spiritual reasons, several things happen:

- **Such simplicity creates space** – space that can be used to love and to serve. This might come in the form of more time, more money, or both.
- **Such simplicity allows us to stake our identity in Christ**, not in the things we own or possess or manage. The very act of simplifying calls our priorities and choices into question, and it affords us the opportunity to choose faithfulness.
- **Such simplicity leads to a refreshing freedom** – freedom to enjoy what really matters and to attend to God’s calling.

Simplicity as an intentional Christian practice is not the same as minimalism. While an uncluttered house or streamlined calendar are always desirable, Christian simplicity intentionally seeks to place our relationship with God at the center of our lives INSTEAD of our schedules and belongings. This week you are invited to look at different aspects of your life and find places that could be “decluttered” so that you are free to “keep company” with Jesus and be transformed.

## Day One - Simplicity in Scripture

### Read Matthew 6:19-34

What is Jesus teaching here about true treasure?

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What are the treasures of your life that cannot rust, be taken away or destroyed?

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Why does Jesus single out money and possessions as standing in the way of life with God? How does that work in your life?

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*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat  
or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear”*

**Matthew 6:25a**

What keeps you up at night? How do you spend your energy? In what ways might you be called to simplify your life and worry less?

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## Day Two -Simplicity with Richard Foster (Author and Spiritual Director)

Contemporary culture is plagued by the passion to possess. Christian simplicity frees us from this mania. It brings sanity to our compulsive extravagance, and peace to our frantic spirit...People once again become more important than possessions. Simplicity enables us to live lives of integrity in the face of the terrible realities of our global village...It is a call given to every Christian. The witness to simplicity is profoundly rooted in the biblical tradition and most perfectly exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ...It is a natural and necessary outflow of the Good News of the Gospel having taken root in our lives.

Richard Foster, *Simplicity and Freedom*

Richard Foster alludes to two strong and very different “calls” for Christians to simplify our lives. Can you articulate them?

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Can you identify with the “mania” and “franticness” of our extravagant and possessive lives? How? What might God be calling you to consider?

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Can you identify with concern for the reality of our global village and the scarcity that exists in our world? What might God be calling you to consider?

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How does our relationship with resources and things betray the Gospel’s impact upon our lives? How does that work in your life?

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### Day Three – Simplicity and Freedom in the Shaker Tradition

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gained,  
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,  
To turn, turn will be our delight,  
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.  
Traditional Shaker Hymn

Christian simplicity is meant to untangle and uncomplicate life, so that we have the freedom to live closer to God and more in tune with the world around us. **Read this hymn a few times and ponder the following questions:**

*When have you received the gift of coming down “where you ought to be?”  
What was that like for you?*

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*Have you ever experienced the freedom of simplicity? Where and how?*

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*Write a prayer to God asking for simplicity in an area of your life that needs less shame and more delight.*

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## Day Four - Simplicity and Your Life

Today you are invited to practice simplicity in a tangible way.

- If you have closets bursting with clothes, you could consider simplifying your wardrobe.
- If you have a calendar with too many appointments, consider simplifying your schedule for the next few weeks.
- Remember –Christian simplicity is about freeing resources and time for God and God’s people.

Choose your project. Sit down and make a plan. If you are simplifying your wardrobe or other belongings, be sure to include how you will use these possessions to benefit others. If you are simplifying your schedule, make a plan for how you will use the time you freed up. Be sure to reflect on your experience and record your learnings.

*How did your project go?*

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*What surprised you?*

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*What questions do you have?*

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## Day Five - Simplicity and Your Energy

As human beings our energy is limited. **Consider the following areas of your life. Rate how much energy you spend on each.** (1 = not much to 5 = all my energy)

Stuff ( ) Money ( ) Schedule ( ) Work ( ) Relationships ( ) Spirit ( ) Health ( )

What gets most of your energy?

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How do you feel about that?

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Where do you feel called to put your energy?

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To make a change?

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Try journaling a prayer that speaks to God about your desires and discomfort when it comes to the way you spend yourself in daily living. Ask for God's help moving forward.

Dear God, . . .

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## Week Five – Forming Faith and Praying

All your love, your stretching out, your hope, your thirst, God is creating  
in you so that God may fill you ... God is on the inside of the longing.

Marie Boulding, Author/Spiritual Director

But whenever you pray, go into your room, and shut the  
door and pray to your Father who is in secret...

Matthew 6:6

Prayer is the essential expression of our relationship with God. It deepens the intimacy of that relationship and transforms our thinking and our spirits daily. As we unplug and listen, fast, and simplify, prayer becomes the language that connects us and forms us.

This week, we will concentrate on the life of prayer. There are many ways to experience communion with God, and to communicate with God, and you are invited to experience a variety of these. This is not a “how to” manual, or an exhaustive study of prayer. Instead, this journal offers steps toward a life bathed in prayer, or a life that can “pray without ceasing.” (I Thessalonians 5:17)

**A note of grace:** prayer does not come naturally for anyone! All our experiences in the previous weeks were designed to help you create the space necessary to truly begin to feel and express your longing for God and to feel and hear God’s longing for you. So be patient and kind with yourself. Try different places, different times, and different styles of prayer. Understand that some experiences of prayer are quiet and sweet, and barely move the spirit, while others are profound and loud. Some experiences of prayer are confusing or frustrating, and others are full of clarity. Prayer is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, so as you try these experiences let the Spirit blow where it will.

In allowing the Spirit to blow, you are allowing God to form you in ways you cannot understand or script. May your prayer time be blessed this week.

## Day One - Praying in Scripture

### Read Philippians 1:3-11

Here we receive a glimpse of the prayer life of the Apostle Paul. **Read his prayer through slowly and quietly more than once.**

What jumps out at you from Paul's prayer?

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What things does Paul seem confident about?

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What does Paul ask for in his prayer?

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As you read this prayer, do you find any clues about "constantly praying with joy"?

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Write a prayer for those you love using similar language and similar petitions.

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## Day Two – Praying in Silence

Prayer is more than the words we speak. It is ultimately about spending time with God. Today you are invited to simply spend time with God in quiet and solitude. Find a quiet place. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Try to empty your mind, best you can. Breathe in saying *Come, Lord Jesus - breathe out saying Speak life to my heart*. Do this slowly, as many times as necessary to relax. Then breathe and rest in silence. When your mind wanders, gently say *Come Lord Jesus, speak life to my heart* again.

Continue to sit in silence for at least 5 minutes – more if you can.

What was your experience like?

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What distracted you?

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How did you experience time? – Did it seem slow/fast/same?

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How do you feel now?

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## Day Three - Praying the Hours

Many religious orders practice regular times of prayer throughout the day as a physical reminder to always remain connected to God. Today you are invited to this ancient tradition.

- First set an alarm for 9 am, 12 pm, 3 pm, 6 pm, and 9 pm. (In the monastery this would continue throughout the night – so if you are awake feel free to add 12 am, 3 am and 6 am to your schedule!)
- Make a list of the people in your life that are weighing on your heart.
- Pick one or two people for each of these hours.
- In your time of prayer lift them up. Lift their concern up. Lift your anxiety up.
- End each time of prayer with these words from Ephesians 3:20-21

**Glory to you O God, whose power is at work in all these things,  
doing so much more than I can ask and imagine. Thank you. Amen.**

*What have you learned from this experience?*

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## Day Four – Praying with Rachel Held Evans (Author)

On the days I believe, the sun streaks across the East Tennessee hills, showing me that green isn't one color but a million. On the days when I believe, the raucous laughter of my kids sounds like the prelude to a grander symphony, a promise of unadulterated joy to come...On the days when I believe, I feel enfolded in a story so much greater than my own. It's a story that knits together a thousand generations of saints...It's a story that makes audacious claims about a man-god named Jesus and calls us into his outstretched arms. On the days when I believe, a prayer feels as if it's just another beautiful beat in a long-running conversation. Nothing is withheld. Everything finds a place, whether lament or hallelujah. I'm convinced it is all heard, because it's a whisper into the ear of an attentive God who loves me and whom I love.

**Rachel Held Evans, Wholehearted Faith**

What does Rachel mean when she says, "on the days that I believe"?

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Do you resonate with Rachel's explanation of prayer?

What doesn't find "a place" in your prayer life?

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If you could whisper something into God's ear today – the ear of someone you love and who loves you, what would it be?

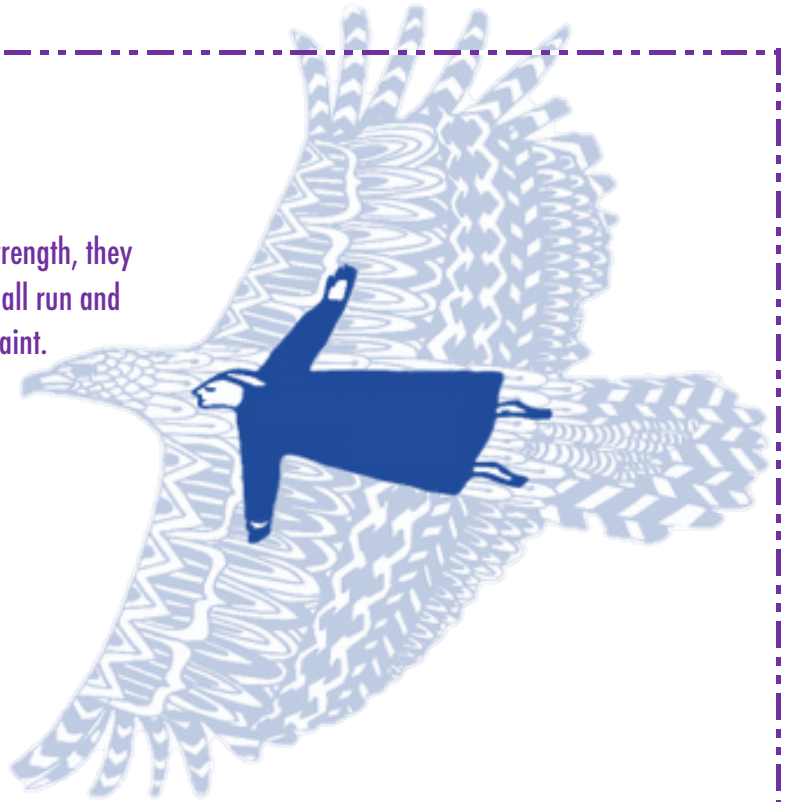
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**Day Five – Praying Isaiah 40:31**

Those that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.



**Read this passage and spend time in silence with this beautiful image.**

*On what do you wait?*

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*What renewal do you seek?*

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*How are you weary?*

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*Renewing God who raises those in need, hear my prayer...*

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## Week Six – Forming Faith & the Way of the Cross

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

**We have this treasure in jars of clay: the Gospel, the life of Christ, the power of God in fragile, breakable jars.** This holy week we are reminded of the fragility of human love and power as Jesus dies upon a cross. And we are also reminded that God is the Potter, whose power overcomes all brokenness and sin; even death itself.

This week you are invited to make space for the foundational story of our faith. You have read the story before – you most likely know it by heart. This year we invite you to make space to walk through this story in a slow, deliberate, and intentional way. Each day read the portion of the passion story that is listed. Read it slowly and carefully. Then be silent and quiet. What words or phrases jump out at you? Close your eyes and speak to God of what you hear and feel. Then read the passage a second time. Read it slowly and carefully. What jumps out at you this time? Close your eyes and listen to what God might be saying. Then read the passage a third time. Read it slowly and carefully. After a time of quiet journal your questions and thoughts.

As you spend time with this passion story of our Lord, may it stir in you an awareness of God's great gift of salvation.

***"For God so loved the world, he sent his only begotten Son, that those who believe in him shall not die, but have eternal life."* John 3:16**

As this week comes to an end, the tomb is sealed. The powers that be step back, dust off their hands and say "well, that takes care of that."

Yes, but Sunday is coming!

## Day One - Preparing to Die

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.' While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

**Mark 14:1-16**

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## Day Two - Last Supper

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' 19They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' 20He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' 23Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' 26 When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

**Mark 14:17-26**

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Day Three – Gethsemane

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ 33 He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. 34 And he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.’ 35 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.’ 37 He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? 38 Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. 41 He came a third time and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Mark 14:32-42

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## Day Four - Trial before Pilate

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. <sup>2</sup>Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' <sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup>Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' <sup>5</sup>But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. <sup>6</sup> Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. <sup>7</sup>Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. <sup>8</sup>So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. <sup>9</sup>Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' <sup>10</sup>For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. <sup>11</sup>But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. <sup>12</sup>Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' <sup>13</sup>They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' <sup>14</sup>Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' <sup>15</sup>So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15:1-15

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## Day Five - Mark 15:25-37 Crucifixion and Death

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!' <sup>31</sup>In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. <sup>33</sup>When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup>At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' <sup>35</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' <sup>36</sup>And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' <sup>37</sup>Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mark 15:25-37

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