

Daily Practices

Week of 8/23/21 - 8/27/21

DAY 1 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:13-16

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

DEVOTIONAL: Since the beginning of time, humanity has been at odds with each other. The sinfulness that we inherited naturally causes us to think selfishly and to act on our own behalf. When everyone thinks and acts for themselves, it creates a dividing wall of hostility that separates us from one another. And worse yet, this sinfulness separates us from God himself! We need some serious help, because on our own accord, we are left in this position of hostility. We are unable to find peace anywhere. But Jesus came to break down the wall of hostility. He reconciled us back to God—and each other—when he gave his life for us. He killed the foundation of hostility by creating peace with God through his blood. Now we can build our lives upon a foundation of peace because we are able to experience this peace with God. But God wants this peace that you've been given to extend into every other area of life. We can now find peace with others because of the foundation of peace that Jesus laid.

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit's prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to what God is speaking to you.

DAY 2 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4:1-7

1I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

DEVOTIONAL: The apostle Paul shared this passage while in prison. Despite being persecuted, he encouraged the Ephesian church to walk in all humility and gentleness, bearing the burdens of one another. Jesus's example for us should be at the forefront of our mind. He met us with all humility. He served us with gentleness, despite us being hostile toward him. He was patient with us when we ran from him. He bore our burdens when we were unable to bear them any more. Jesus isn't calling us to do something that he didn't do. He already walked in a manner that was worthy, and now he is calling us into that as well. But he knows that we will need help. For this reason, he sent his Spirit to live within us and bind us to himself in peace. When we allow the Spirit to unite us with Christ, then our actions start to look more like Christ's actions. Surrendering ourselves to Christ should lead us to walk in the manner that we have been called to walk.

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit's prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to what God is speaking to you.

DAY 3 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 6:1-5

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. **5** For each will have to bear his own load.

DEVOTIONAL: Despite being united with Christ by the Holy Spirit, we will still turn back to our old ways. It is natural to live in our sinful habits. Yes, we are being made new, but our sinful tendencies still have a grip on us. We need help. Not only does Jesus give us a new example, and his Holy Spirit, but he also gives us a new community of people to help us. The church is called to bear the burdens of each other. We should live in a manner that reflects our union with Christ. When one of us suffers, then we all should feel that pain. When one of us experiences joy, we should all feel that joy. The church should be so connected, that we experience life like our own physical bodies experience our daily life. But it's scary to open ourselves up to this level of vulnerability. It's easier to put walls up and try to live on our own—but it's not healthiest for us. We need others for our own spiritual growth. How are you opening yourself to be a part of a community of people that can care for you in the ways of Jesus?

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit's prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to what God is speaking to you.

DAY 4 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. **15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

DEVOTIONAL: Living the Christian life alone leads to isolated danger. Much like a hunted prey that is wandering alone is more vulnerable, an isolated Christian is more vulnerable to temptation or attack. We must allow others to know us deeply and speak truth into our lives. Sometimes that means we will hear things that are difficult. Sometimes we may need to change our behavior. We may need to repent. But ultimately, the Christian community should be founded upon the love of Jesus. If our common goal is to follow Jesus, then we should invite others to help us grow. And ultimately, we can know that we are growing closer to Jesus when the fruit of our lives is love. A life that doesn't lead to love is not the life that Jesus intends for you. Your maturity in Christ can be measured by your capacity to love others.

RESPONSE: Take a few minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit's prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to what God is speaking to you.

DAY 5 // DAILY PRACTICES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, please help me to slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you. Please open my heart to receive what you want me to hear; and please empower me by your Spirit to live the way that you are asking me to live.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 3:8-12

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9** and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, **10** so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. **11** This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. **13** So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

DEVOTIONAL: Paul is asking the Ephesian church not to lose heart over the suffering that Paul and the church were experiencing. As people from all walks of life were coming together in love, it shows the power of God. When the power of God is unleashed in the world, evil forces try to counteract that power. That means it shouldn't surprise us when the "rulers and authorities" in the spiritual realm try to fight the power of God. The plan of God has always been to unite humanity through his Son, Jesus. In spite of the suffering that we might face, we can have confidence because we have access to God's presence with us right now. Jesus has been working all things together in order to unite humanity with each other and with himself since the fall, so when he promises never to leave us and when he promises he to help us, we can trust that he is faithful in keeping his promises.

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit's prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to what God is speaking to you.