

# The Life With God Together

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*40-day Devotional*

*By Dr. Angulus Wilson*

*Chaplain of Wheaton College*



WHEATON  
COLLEGE  
*For Christ & His Kingdom*



## *Devotional Prayer*

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Eternal Father, our God, thank you. We are truly grateful for the gift of your son Jesus in our hearts, to our world and in our lives. Thank you for smiling on us as a campus community. Now, would you bless everyone that is represented here, would you bless every student? As we go into the world to make disciples, would we bring You glory and honor in the world. We thank you Father. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

DAY 1

# Pray About It!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Today, let's remember to keep prayer as a critical area in every area of our life. It's a value and it's the engine that drives the believer. As Paul's words to the Philippians go, don't be anxious about anything, but in prayer, when things get tough, make your petitions to God. May God bless you this week as you study, as you share and as you have a wonderful journey in spiritual formation.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you for this month as we celebrate a new beginning as we tap in to go deeper with You. We love you Lord. Bless every student, Father, and we'll give you all the honor and glory and praise for what you produce in us and what you bring forth out of this season. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

*As you walk through this year at Wheaton, how does today's devotional resonate with where you are in your spiritual journey?*

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*What steps can you take to live out the truths you've encountered in this devotional?*

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DAY 2

# Bible Study

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved. A workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Apostle Paul gives this letter to his son in the ministry, Timothy, to encourage him to be diligent as he serves the church in Ephesus. And today, as your chaplain, I want to give you this amazing value for this month. You too be diligent in studying God's word. It'll be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psalm 119:105). It'll help you, it'll encourage you; it'll help you continue to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, when it gets difficult and you feel like giving up, hang in there and grab a hold onto God's Holy Scriptures. God will bless you and meet you as you study His word.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you for this value, the value of bible study. Would you cultivate in our hearts a love for your Scripture, a love to hear your voice and a love to hear you speak and direct our paths. God bless every student today. Help us to become diligent in studying your word and we'll love you for it. Thank you for our time, until we meet again, bless us now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Missions

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always until the very end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

In this value of missions we are called as believers to be on mission in our families, our neighborhoods, our states, our country and throughout the world. That's right, you and I. We're the hands and the feet of Christ called to serve the least of these and our mission at part of our mission at Wheaton College is to encourage one another to not forget that God would have you and I go out into all of the world. So as we talk about the values of prayer, bible study and mission, let's continue to apply them to our lives so that we can continue to grow in God's word, in his grace and be all that he needs us to be to a dying and hurting generation.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, I thank you today for each and every servant student at Wheaton College. I pray God that you would show them where you would have them to serve on your mission. Father, open doors for us, lead us and guide us. Provide us with the resources that we need to bridge the relational gaps, to get out of our comfort zones, and to reach out to our peers, both known and unknown, to continue sharing the good news and your love to all that they might walk in the abundant life you died and rose to give us. Would you bless us to hold fast to the Gospel message? Give us the opportunities to share our faith and encourage one another. So thank you for these values this month, teach us how to live them out. We thank you for it. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Ministry

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart, rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not use deception nor do we distort the word of God. But on the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-2

These powerful words written by our brother, the apostle Paul, written to the church of Corinth remind us that God has something for all of us to do. Whether we're working in class, serving in a ministry, making pizzas at our local job or anything else, God has a plan and a ministry that he has given to every single one of us. By his Spirit, we're to not lose heart, we're to renounce those secret and shameful ways and teach the truth plainly wherever the Lord has sent us. We share with God's love and pray that every man's conscience shall be turned to God. So today, as you're sitting in the various spaces and places you occupy, as you're serving on floors and teams, as you're working in your jobs, remember that the Spirit of God has you there; that's his mission for you. When you pray, when you study God's word, when you live a life on mission, then the ministry of the Holy Spirit will help you, encourage you, keep you, lead you and guide you as you do all that you do in the name of Jesus.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you today for our community. Bless these, your children, use them greatly as they go into all the world to proclaim this powerful gospel. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Stewardship

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

ACTS 4:32

This amazing church in the book of Acts, the book of church history, was on fire for God. They loved one another with all that they had and all that they were consumed with. They shared their entire lives with everybody so that nobody in that congregation or in that community went without. They valued the power of stewardship. And that's my challenge and charge to you today. Be a great steward over your resources, your relationships and most of all, anything that God would bring into your life.

So the question today is how good of a steward are you? Are you a good steward over your time, your talents, your treasures, your thoughts? What about your coursework from class or from Bible Studies and Life Groups? Whatever it is that God has blessed you with, be a great steward for God. Share, give, and invest in the lives of others and watch and see, if God won't do the same in your life! I thank God for you, I thank God for being here with you and I thank God for embracing a new beginning.

**PRAYER:**

Holy Father, thank you for this occasion and the opportunity to be stewards of the ministry you have called us to. Through this season may we be reminded that all that we have is yours, and that you will one day return and in that time we must give an account for all you have entrusted to us. Help us to be better stewards with all that we have. In Jesus name. Amen.

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# What is Love?

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

JOHN 15:12

Here in this passage we see a new call to action from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's a call to demonstrate what one believes and cherishes about love. It's a call to love in a difficult time, beyond our grievances, above all accusations and in spite of all disappointments. See instead of what one's flesh would do, this demonstrative act of sacrificial love is being taught to us by the Christ. Here's what I've come to believe: this type of love trumps any other kind of love. This kind of love that Jesus is talking about is not fickle; it's not sometimes on and sometimes off. In fact, this type of love is a sacrificial commitment that involves the whole being of a person and literally cost a person their life.

What is Christ talking to us about today? Well, I believe he's calling us to encounter him through this marvelous act of love. See Jesus in this passage is pressing his way to the cross to pay for the sins of the world and it's the last night before he is going to be betrayed and be handed over to those who would kill him. These powerful words and this powerful command is instruction that's given to his disciples so that they would know exactly what God is calling them to do in a fallen world.

Well my beloved, this is what I want you to know: as you're studying in your classes, Bible studies and life groups, as you're serving one another in your communities, your church and your peer groups, remember to love one another because it is a commandment from God. So, how do we place this in active relation to everything that we're doing? First of all, forgive the one who has offended you. Serve the one who is least likely to be served. And whatever you do, put God first in every area of your life.

**PRAYER:**

Eternal God, our Father, thank you. Thank you for this amazing privilege to study your word as a community, to gather and grow here at Wheaton College. We pray for our campus leadership, every faculty, staff and board member.. Help us to love in difficult times and help our love to reflect that of Christ. Bless our campus Lord, bless all that we plan to do and help us align our lives up with you. We thank you for it. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# The Evidence

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.

JOHN 15:12

When we come to the text today we see that Jesus is charging the believer to do something. He's charging us to obey and demonstrate our love through the brethren. The words "to love" here is a command and is written in what we call the present active tense. That means it's something you keep on doing and it's not something that you do just one time. In other words, you don't stop no matter what the outcome is in the object of the thing in which you are loving. For example, my professor, Dr. Elwell, says that John uses this language over four times in the book of John and he's writing it because it's a word that's powerful to him. He says 'I'm giving you a new commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you,' in John 13:4.

Now according to Dr. Elwell, the disciples were being encouraged to love their enemies because they were living in a hostile time as followers of Christ. Dr. Elwell also suggests that Jesus' command to love is for those who are in his body; we are to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, this would provide proof to a fallen world that we were his believers, his followers, his sons and daughters—if we love one another.

So their love and our love would provide proof, evidence, that we are followers of Christ—do you have that evidence today? Do the people in your sphere of influence know that you love them today? How about your families? What about your church communities? How about the people on your floor? Does your roommate know that you love them today? If not, here's the love challenge this month: love somebody in spite of how they respond to you.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you so much. Thank you for our campus, thank you for this great Christ-centered college. Thank you for the opportunity to study about your love. Thank you for the reminder that greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for a friend. Teach us to know what this means, teach us how to live this out. Teach us to be brothers and sisters that truly love one another and we'll give honor, glory and praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# The Love Challenge

You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends for all the things that I have heard from my father I have made known to you.

JOHN 15:14-15

In this particular verse, Jesus is now calling his disciples friends. For his own death on the cross has proved his love for them and now they would prove their love for him by loving one another and loving the entire world. See, friends see each other and they help each other, and the obedience of Christ that flows through the believer ought to be on display for a sick and dying world. Guess what family? God is calling on us to love our neighbors, to love one another and to be the example of Christ on the earth. So, because we are his friends and he abides in us, we too ought to abide in him and do the things we've seen him do. In Scripture we're reminded that Abraham was God's friend and God told him the plans he had for a fallen world. And so today I want to remind you that you too are a friend of God and he has shared his plan with you; for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**PRAYER:**

Eternal Father, our God, thank you. Thank you for the love you have for us and the love you've shown abroad in our hearts. Thank you for dying on the cross for our sins, rising victoriously from the grave and giving to everyone freely, the wonderful gift of eternal life by believing and confessing in your son Jesus. Thank you so much for this great campus, bless our Discipleship Small groups, and all other groups of students that gather in your Name to study and learn together. Thank you for our godly leadership, our administration, our student teams, but most of all thank you for your Word that helps to show us the Way. We love you, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Friends Through Hardship

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

JOHN 19:25

When we come to this particular verse, we see the Master hanging on the cross of Calvary. Calvary was a bloody mess. As Jesus was hanging there, dying for your sins and mine, the text reminds us that his mom is present, and his mother's sister and Mary Magdalene. This is very important for us to take note of because what you see here in this particular writing of John is the ministry of friendship, Mary is not alone. Though her son, the Savior of humanity is dying, present to minister to her is her sister and her friend Mary Magdalene, and together they teach us how to walk with one another in community. They model for us what it looks like to be a friend in a very difficult time. See, only true friends will walk with you in times of calamity. Only true friends will be there for you when your son is dying or when you're going through a very, very tough time in life. And I'm reminded of a story, my very own story. In 1995 when my brother Jerol was killed, it was two of my best friends, Minister Rodney Croom and Minister Michael Green, that came to my aid and ministered to me in my crisis.

Today I'm grateful for brothers in the ministry like that. How about you? What kind of friend are you for those in your circle? What kind of friend are you in those of your extended community? Do you love like this? Are you caring for one another like this? This is what we learn in this text today, how to minister to those who are in need.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you. Thank you for this study, help us to grow in your grace and to learn what it means to be a friend in the ministry and serve those who are hurting in a difficult time of life. May we grow from this, may we learn, may we bring you honor, glory and praise. We love you, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# The Gift of Relationship

When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son."

JOHN 19:26

Now we see on the cross that Jesus observing mom also observes someone else at the cross that day—John, his beloved disciple and the writer of this story. Jesus says to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." What a powerful ministry, for it in we see the ministry of giving. That's right; Christ is giving his mom comfort in that John is now going to care for her. Now why is this important? Well, in Jewish history, if the eldest son was left in charge of the family after the death of the dad, it was his responsibility to care for the mom. In this case, Mary's husband Joseph is gone, Jesus is now giving up his life and Jesus has the responsibility to make provision and care for his mom. So he turns to his disciple and he gives his disciple an assignment—he is now to care for his mom. What a powerful statement about ministry. What a powerful gift that he would give a grieving mom in the time of need.

And I just believe that Jesus is calling you and I to think like this on earth when it comes to our own lives. Are we giving in their time of need? Are we meeting their darkest need? Are we ministering to them and are we available to care for them? John now would have to take Mary into his home to care for her and Mary would have to be willing to allow John to minister to her. This is a ministry of friendship, of divine friendship. So, as we ponder on these thoughts, how does this apply to your life? In what ways can you see yourself giving so that somebody else may benefit from your love and your grace?

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you. Thank you for what we're learning in this text and how we're being challenged and pushed to serve out of our comfort zones to serve others. Help us to have an eye for those in need and an eye for those who are lacking family, friendship and support in tough and difficult times. Help us to be your hands and feet and help us, like John, to answer the call. Thank you for our time today, bless each member of your body and strengthen them as they continue to grow in your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# The Ministry of Giving

Then Jesus said to his disciple, "Behold your mother." And from that hour that disciple took her into his home.

JOHN 19:27

Jesus in this moment of dying for your sins and mine, gives his disciple, John an assignment to care for his mom. He gives his mom great news that she's not going to be left alone for John now is her son. So when we come to this verse, we see what I call the ministry of giving. It's the ministry that's been initiated by God the Father.

First of all, what you see in this text is God the Father gives his only begotten son to die for the sins of the world. Secondly, we see the son giving himself sacrificially on the cross to take your place for your sins and mine. Thirdly, we see Jesus giving somebody to care for his mom, whom he knew would need to be cared for. Isn't this powerful? What a powerful ministry, for it tells you and me that God has given us as gifts to one another, to care for one another, to live in community with each other. That, my brothers and sisters, is true friendship. I like this also because John now has an awesome responsibility. Not only to care for his teacher's mom, but his lord and savior's responsibility that he had on earth is now John's.

You know what, I wonder today. I wonder if you look at your friends and your ministry opportunities. I wonder if you look at your brothers and sisters, and your parents, as ministry opportunities from God. That'll change your family dynamics. Ponder these things, hold them to your heart and let's go out really loving our families and being kind, gentle and meek toward one another. Let's see what Christ wants to do in our lives.

**PRAYER:**

Eternal God, our Father, thank you. Thank you for our families, thank you for the ministry that we have to them in our homes. Help us to love them and to appreciate them and to be kind and affectionate toward them. Lord, many of us have difficult homes in which we come from so we need to be reminded that our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers are made in the image of God and that we ought to care for them and love them. Help us to be like John and willingly accept this assignment to care for those whom you love. Now God, bless us today, teach us how to do this and we'll be mindful to give you the honor, glory and praise. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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# It is Finished

So when Jesus had received the sour wine he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up the spirit."

JOHN 19:30

After giving his ministry assignments to John and his mother Mary, Jesus takes the sour wine that has been offered to him on the cross and says, "it is finished." It's a powerful word, and in the Greek it's called tetelestai. This word was used when artists would complete an amazing piece of work; they would say tetelestai. When a slave would come into his master and report that his duties were done for the day, he would say tetelestai. It's a word that says it is finished, it is complete and here's what it meant: it's finished now, it's finished tomorrow and it's finished in the future. Wow.

When Jesus is using these words, guess what he's making reference to? My sins and your sins. When he dies on the cross on this glorious Friday he says it is finished, it is complete. I'm dying for their sins today, tomorrow and forever. Wow. Tetelestai. Guess what family? God loved you that much, he gave you the ministry of friendship to last today, tomorrow and forever. Why?

Because he was our friend as well; he loved us, he was our savior, he died on the cross for us and he took our sins of today and tomorrow and cast them into the no longer. I'm glad for that today. So be encouraged as you press on to give God your all and as you serve one another with a Christ like mentality.

**PRAYER:**

Holy Father, thank you for the sufferings of your son Jesus the Christ. Thank you for all that he endured on our behalf. Thank you for the work being completed and guaranteeing us new life forevermore. In Jesus name, Amen.

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# Seeking the Kingdom

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

MATTHEW 6:33

Brothers and sisters, as you journey through this year and you go through with your hands held high and your head toward heaven, remember that if you need resources seek first the kingdom of God and God will supply what you need to accomplish the task in which he has called you to serve him in. Be diligent and faithful students, stay connected to each other, pray for each other and together, we'll continue to build the kingdom of God by changing lives one person at a time.

**PRAYER:**

Eternal God, Our Father, thank you for these you servants. Thank you for their willingness to come and study and serve at this great campus. Would you bless them now as they go into the world and make disciples? Open closed doors for those who need provision, open those doors; for those who are going for an opportunity, give them favor. For those, oh God, who are navigating difficult family situations and in need of endurance, and courage, give them all they need so they can carry out the task for you. We love you for their lives, and their commitment to this campus, but most of all, to the study of your word. Go before them. And now, may the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit rest, rule and abide upon us all until we gather again. We love you, In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Serving the Least of These

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple.

ACTS 3:1-2

When we come to this passage we see the first century church doing something that today's church is actively involved in: going to gather to the place of prayer to worship God and as they're going up they're on one accord.

We understand this because Peter and John are traveling together and on their way to the temple they see something powerful; they see a man who is lame and crippled laying at the gate. This is going to be a very powerful story for us because the brothers do not bypass the man and his need. They see him struggling, broken and hurting and even before they go into worship, they stop to serve.

What a call this is. Guess what family? This is your call, this is my call and it is a call to serve the least of these. I'm blown away by this text because the brothers see it as a very important act of their worship to serve somebody who is broken and hurting. How about you today, who are you serving on your way to worship? Who has your attention? Who has a need that you can supply for before you go into worship? Hmm. Something to think about. Be looking for somebody you can serve. Somebody, perhaps, that is on the outside of your place of worship. Before you even go into prayer, how about meeting the need of a brother or sister who's stranded on the roadside of life?

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you for our family. Thank you for our time of studying and thank you for your word. Would you challenge us this month, pull us from our comfort zone and help us to see those who are less fortunate than us? Help us to give, just like you gave. We love you and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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## Look at Us

And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, “Look at us.”

ACTS 3:2-4

Last week we began talking about this story and how the brothers were going up together on one accord to pray. This is a great picture of how the church of Jesus Christ ought to be on the same page with one another. Secondly we saw that on their way into the temple they saw a man laying outside of the temple gate who was lame from birth—he was a brother who had needs. So before they even went into worship they were ready to minister to their brother’s needs and we asked the question, “How many people have you seen on your way to worship with a need that you could meet?”

Third of all, we noticed in this text that the man laying at the gate upon seeing Peter asks for an offering. I think this is very important for us to remember, family—in looking at the brothers he identifies that perhaps they can meet one of his needs. That’s right. It’s almost as if the world looking in at the church and says that the church or the saints have something to offer me. I find that interesting.

The next thing we see is that Peter and John, looking at the man, call for him to do something powerful. They say three dangerous words, “Look at us.” I find this very interesting. They have the faith to call this man to look at them and I call these words dangerous because if we’re going to ask the world to look at us, we ought to be ready for what they’re about to see. If we’re calling them to look at us we ought to be living a lifestyle that is consistent with what God says we ought to be. If we’re going to ask the world to look on us, we ought to be the children of God that can give the world hope and faith in the time of their despair.

**PRAYER:**

Eternal father our God, please prepare us to be an example for a hurting world. Please help us to minister to those whom you have brought into our sphere of influence. May your body be a shining light for a broken world in this season. In Jesus name, Amen.

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## Would You Like to Walk?

So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

ACTS 3:5-10

As we conclude our wonderful story in this text, here’s what we discover: there was a man who was born in an awful condition. He was lame from birth, unable to walk, could not run, could not jump—he never experienced what it felt like to stand on his own two legs and all of his life he lived in this condition.

This man, for us, is a picture of humanity. See, all of humanity has been born lame, not lame physically, but lame spiritually. We’ve been born sinners, separated from a holy God, unable to walk upright in a life that’s pleasing to God. We are like this man, born in a terrible condition. But God, sent his only begotten son, Jesus the Christ, to go to an old rugged cross on a hill called Calvary so that you and I might be saved to have the ability to walk uprightly before God. Peter and John identified this man and they decided to minister to him. Our text says in verses 3 and 4 that Peter calls out to the man to look at them and says ‘You’re asking me for money, but money I don’t have, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ And the bible says that Peter gave him his hand and he pulled the man up, and the man stood on his feet. Instantly his ankles and his feet became strong and he was able to stand.

Here’s the meaning of this powerful verse: sometimes, people who are in this lame condition don’t have faith to believe in the miracle of life. So as believers, as we go into the world and into places of worship, we must believe for them and be able to extend the right hand to them and proclaim that the same Jesus that has called you and I to walk and gave us strength is the same Jesus that will give them strength. So, as you go out into your families, to your places of worship, your homes and neighborhoods, be looking for those who are lame from life. Be looking for those who don’t have the ability to walk before God with a holy walk and extend to them the right hand of fellowship and the prayer of Jesus Christ. Simply ask them, “Would you like to walk? Would you like to have your lives changed? Then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” This is a call to service; let’s go into the world and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

**PRAYER:**

Our father and our God we pray for obedience and evangelism. Please give us a heart to see those who are hurting and wounded by life. Give us eyes to see and the voice to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ. Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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# The Lord's Promise

When Solomon finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, the Lord appeared to him at night and said, "I have heard your prayers and I have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be opened and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place."

2 CHRONICLES 7:11-15

Here we find a very powerful promise from God concerning Solomon and the people's prayers. Solomon is the new king of Israel, he has built the temple of God and he has erected a great sacrifice to him and God is so pleased that he answers his prayers that night in a dream and speaks to Solomon and gives him these powerful words. They're words that I like to call "conditional words". He first begins by saying, 'Solomon, when I shut up the heavens that there is no rain, or when I command locusts to devour the land or when I send a plague among my people, then my people who call unto me humble themselves seek my face and turn from their wicked ways I will hear their prayers.' This is a powerful statement because God literally says I am going to allow calamity to come into their lives, I'm going to give them a reason to pray. Isn't that true? You don't pray like you should always pray until a little trouble comes your way, and when God sends trouble he expects for his children to pray. That's what I get out of this passage. So as we are praying in the midst of our trouble, God has promised to heal our trouble if we will turn from our ways, to seek his face and God has then promised to hear our prayer and forgive our sin.

This has been a powerful time in the Word. I pray that as you think on these things if there's any area in your life not pleasing to God, you'd do something about it today, that God may bless you and you may draw closer to him.

**PRAYER:**

Thank you Lord that you are still building your church and that it is your design, it is your delight, and it is your decision to shape her and mold her and make her into the body you would desire her to be. Thank you for this passage that reminds us that you still build beautiful things. In this season, please continue to build your body up. In Jesus name we pray Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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# The Power of Prayer

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

MARK 11:25-26

As we read this text today, Jesus is nearing Calvary where he is taking out time to clearly teach his disciples a true and powerful lesson on prayer. See, the disciples would need to know this if they were going to be in constant community and communication with the Father. They were going to need to know that understanding prayer was going to help them on their journey; understanding prayer would help them communicate to God.

There is no such thing as a mature Christian who does not spend time in prayer. When you spend time in prayer, you begin to understand how God speaks, when he speaks, what he's saying, what he will do for you and what he wants you to know and understand in your relationship with him. That's why this lesson is so critical today. Jesus is talking to his disciples, he's not talking to the unbeliever, so he wants them to know that in community with each other you have to forgive one another, you have to be patient with one another and you have to pray for one another. This is so serious that he says, if you don't forgive others I'm not going to hear your prayer.

I wonder today, are you holding a grudge against somebody? Are you struggling with forgiving someone who may have hurt you? Well, the truth of the matter is, you don't have a choice! You have to forgive them. I know it may be difficult, I know it may be challenging, but here is where you start. Ask God to first help you to forgive the one who has offended you, and I guarantee you the power of the Holy Spirit will begin to turn your heart and mind so that you can release the one who has done you wrong. Let's practice praying for the enemy this week and see what God will do in your life.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you for our family and thank you for the challenge of forgiving those who have wronged us. Thank you for the reminder that we want to be forgiven, so we ought to forgive those who have hurt us. So help those who are reading now who may be struggling with such a challenge. We love you and we bless you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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## Praying for Power in the Ministry

And being let go they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. So when they had heard that they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, "Lord you are God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said, 'Why did the nations rage and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' For truly against your holy Servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.

ACTS 4:23-30

Here in this text, Peter and John had just got arrested in the temple for helping a crippled man, it was a wonderful miracle that was done and as he was raised up and went inside rejoicing they immediately got arrested by the religious leaders of that day. The religious leaders kept them in prison overnight and at the end of their sentencing they called them and commanded them never to preach in the name of Jesus ever again.

Well, the apostles, upon their release, went back to the church to give a report of what had happened. And so when we come to the day's text, we see what happened after the congregation received the news—they instantly began to pray. I wonder today, how are you in your communities? Do you pray about the things that have happened to family members or community members or your peers? I want to encourage you that prayer always releases stress and clearly indicates where your heart is concerning matters that impact and affect you. Well, the disciples pray, and in this prayer they pray that God would do great things on their behalf.

First of all, they don't pray with anger against their enemies, second of all they don't pray for revenge, but they ask for God to reveal Himself to them, give them more power to heal to do miracles and to proclaim his word. Wow! That's a heart of prayer. In the midst of persecution, in the midst of suffering, they ask for the power and the ability, and the opportunity to do it all over again. How about you? That's a faithful believer! I want to pray like that. Would you pray for me this month that I would be like these brothers and I'm going to pray for you too.

### PRAYER:

Holy Father in this season, teach us to pray like this. Teach us to pray with great anticipation and with great rejoicing. Teach us to anticipate what you are doing and going to do in our lives. Teach us to pray more in this season. We want to pray with the mind of Christ in every situation in our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

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## Praying for the Enemy

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

LUKE 23:34

See, one of the greatest things in the world is to pray for those who are abusing you, who have been mean to you, who have deliberately hurt you or persecuted you. The Christian life is not one that is void of conflict. In fact, because you come to Christ, many times your life is going to get a whole lot worse before it gets better. Why? Because suffering and persecution come with carrying the cross. People may oppress you, they may close doors on you, they may not accept you, but know that they did it to Jesus as well. Here we can find that praying to God for the enemy is something that Jesus teaches us what to do. As he's hanging on that cross for the sins of the world—they have just nailed him there and are now taking his clothes and gambling for them and instead of cursing them or railing on them he prays on their behalf. Jesus says these words in Matthew 5:44, "But I say unto you, love your enemies and bless them that curse you, do good to them who hate you and pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you."

I like to call this clause here a command. And it is a command to those who are faithful followers to Christ. Why? Because it shows unto an unbelieving planet that our God lives in us and that our God reigns in us. It takes power to forgive those who have hurt you and guess what? That power lives in every child of God. It's the power of the Holy Spirit who walks with us, talks with us and encourages us and leads us in the things of God. So today, you have enemies, if you're struggling with pardoning someone who's hurt you take your lessons from Jesus. Ask God to give you the power that he gave to Christ in order for you to pray for your enemies.

### PRAYER:

Holy Father, please forgive those who have done harm to us, and those we have done harm to. Please heal our broken hearts and heal the wounds of those we have caused harm to. Teach us to pray often for our enemies and to no longer be the enemy in the lives of others. In Jesus name, Amen.

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## Into Your Hands

And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit.” And when He had said this, He breathed His last.

LUKE 23:46

Family, it was a Good Friday afternoon and the time was between 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the evening. Darkness had swept across the land and the Master was fulfilling his commitment to the Father to rescue humanity from the sting of death. The Lamb of God was being sacrificed on our behalf and Dr. Luke, the writer of this amazing gospel, is telling us that Jesus was having a conversation with His father as He hung on the cross. Think about this. While in agony, the Christ was talking to His father on behalf of you and I. While in agony, he was surrendering himself to the only one who could intervene. This is what prayer is all about. Prayer is having the ability to talk to God no matter what situation you may be in.

Someone reading this today may need to be reminded that you too can talk to God in the midst of your troubles. You may need to be reminded that God hears you in the midst of your struggles. Jesus on the cross gives us great examples of what you and I can look to do in the time of need. So, we invite you to pray. Pray through the struggles you may be encountering, pray for the difficulties that may come your way. I guarantee you that like he heard Christ, he'll hear you too.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you. Thank you that we have just dived into this wonderful passage and have examined the prayer of our wonderful Savior on the cross. Would you bless every student of your body this month? There may be struggles in their homes, struggles in their lives and their communities where they are serving—would you open the windows of heaven and receive their petitions. Bless them in a supernatural way. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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## Keeping Scripture on Your Mind

And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit.” And when He had said this, He breathed His last.

LUKE 23:46

Last time we saw that Jesus was praying to His father in a moment of agony. Jesus's example shows us that you and I have access to the Father in moments of stress and trouble and trial. As we look at the same verse we find out what Jesus is saying when he cries out, “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” He's actually praying Psalm 31:5, that's right. Jesus is praying Scripture in the midst of His storm. He borrowed these words from King David, not that He needed to have words put into His mouth, but that He chose to make use of David's words is a testimony that the word of prophesy for His own life. Jesus out on the cross, literally dies with Scripture on His mind. Wow.

What an awesome picture that you and I have. We can have the word of God on our mind in difficult and trying situations as we communicate with God. I like this example because I discover that when I am discouraged or when I'm in trouble or when I am in trial Scripture helps my mind to meditate and to be encouraged with knowing the outcome is in the Lord's hand. The Scripture actually says, into your hands I commit my spirit. Wow. Jesus was encouraged and encouraging himself as he talked to the father to know that God had all things in control and that God would see him through. As you're going through it, walking and living in community, keep that in mind— Jesus is with you and the Lord will see you through.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you. Thank you for family, thank you for this wonderful passage of Scripture that reminds us that the Father hears us, even in the midst of our struggles and our trial. As we watch Jesus' life out on the cross, we too can be encouraged to know that God will hear us when we pray and see us through. We thank you for it. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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# The Great Intercessor

And Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit My =spirit." And when He had said this, He breathed His last.

LUKE 23:46

According to Luke, Jesus is out on the cross praying to the Father and he's interceding, praying Psalm 31 and in this Psalm we find that Jesus is actually quoting Scripture as a source of encouragement for Him in his dying. This Psalm also has a further and deeper meaning. See, scholars tells us that this was a famous psalm often prayed by Jewish children at the time they went to bed at night. It's kind of like our American children's prayer; we say sometimes, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Well this common prayer that was used by Jewish children was a prayer that Jesus would understand that God had Him in the moment of confession.

I like this right here, this prayer is a prayer of assurance. It's assurance in knowing that we are safe in the Father's hands. It's assurance in knowing that we can have confidence when we lay our eyes to sleep and rest in His will. Jesus had confidence that the Father had him even in His suffering and His dying moment. I'm glad today of this confidence because on that Friday night Jesus died out on that old rugged cross and the good news is that early Sunday morning he rose from the dead with all power of heaven and earth in his hands. That's why you and I celebrate the glorious resurrection, Easter celebration morning—because of what Christ did by conquering death, conquering the grave and rising again with all power of heaven and earth in his hands.

**PRAYER:**

Holy Father, thank you for the finished work out on calvary's cross. Thank you for your son Jesus who committed his life to you and took our sins upon himself. Thank you that Jesus and the Holy Spirit Is our great intercessors who constantly carries our burdens to the father. In Jesus name, Amen.

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# Keep Your Love Alive

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

REVELATION 2: 1

When we come to this message family, we get to see how to keep your love for God alive. See God in this letter sends a message to the church that's been written by the hand of John the Apostle. And at the time of this letter, Timothy is said to have been the pastor of the church in Ephesus (he was the apostle Paul's son in the ministry). And this letter is written to Timothy to read to the church body in Ephesus. This is not a letter of rebuke to Timothy, the pastor, but rather it's a letter of responsibility to the whole congregation.

See, this message is from the Lord Jesus Christ who holds the pastor and the congregation in his hand and whose spirit walks among the churches. God today is alive and well and is actively involved in the life of his church. So as we think about these things and as we ponder them, spiritual formation is the work of God through the lives of his people and here in this letter, this letter is going to remind them how to keep their love alive for God. As God has written this letter to Timothy to give to the church of Ephesus, he has also written this letter to you. This is your letter and it has your name on it. Read it gently, read it patiently and hear what God has to say.

**PRAYER:**

Spirit of the living God, please keep our hearts in our minds reflecting on the love that you have for us in the love that we should have for you. We want to be your bride who shows and appreciates love that you have for us. Help us to keep our love alive in you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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## He Sees You

I know all the things that you do. I've seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know that you do not tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered that they are liars and you have patiently suffered for me without 40 days quitting.

REVELATION 2:2-3

Here in this text, Jesus informs the congregation that he knows everything about them. He's been walking among them, he sees the way they work, he sees the things they put up with, he sees the evil things that are happening in their city. He sees their suffering and he knows the doctrines or the false teachings that surround them. The Master is closely supervising the life and activity of this church and because he's doing this he sees them living among pagan religions and lying teachers and preachers and he is aware of their painful struggles. Now this city looks like our city. It looks like you and I because you and I both live in a world where all these things are happening. Jesus, as he speaks, is making them aware that he is aware of all that they are going through, and a part of his spiritual formation for their life is for them to know that God is with them and God is walking with them and he sees all that they endure. These two verses, one and two, are meant to encourage you today, that you can know that no matter what your sufferings look like, God has not forsaken you. He's with you and he sees your difficult obstacles.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you. Thank you for this great reading, thank you for this lesson and we look forward to next week when we can come back and learn what it is you have to say about us in spite of the difficult things we are facing. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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## True Love

I have this complaint against you, that you don't love me or each other as you did at first. Look at how far you have fallen from your first love. Turn back to me again and work as you did at first, and if you don't I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.

REVELATION 2:4-5

Wow. When we come to this portion of the text, we get to see an allegation that Christ had against the church of Ephesus. He says that they have lost their first love. They no longer loved him or each other the way they used to. They no longer were the people of God who were on fire for him. Rather, they had become a professional, theological, Christian congregation. They didn't stand for false teachers, false teachings, but yet they quit having meaningful fellowship. No longer were they led by God's spirit to really embrace and go deeper with God. This body of believers had quit supporting one another, looking out for one another taking care of one another and doing the things that prove they loved one another. As a result, Christ shows up with a warning, an allegation to them to repent and to turn.

See, this is a letter of relationship. And no relationship can last if love is not at the center of it. This is what I want to challenge us with today, I want to challenge us to be in love with God. Not just in words, but in deed. See, we'll know Christ gives them a warning and says I'm going to remove my candlestick from your presence. See, I'm not going to remove my relationship, but I'm going to remove my presence from within your church. Are you there today? Do you have a relationship with God but you don't feel him there? Perhaps you've lost your first love. If that's it, why don't you do what Christ is calling them to do in this moment of spiritual formation—to go back to the first things they used to do. Go back and remember how you walked with him, you talked with him—you loved him. Why don't you do that today? Powerful.

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank you for the challenge today. Thank you for as we listen and we wrestle with spiritual formation help us to be those people that cultivate a love relationship with you on a continuous basis. Help us oh God to not be casual or just go through the moments with you, but help us to love you more than life itself. And we'll give you the honor, the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Be Salty

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled under the foot of man.

MATTHEW 5:13

Jesus in this amazing passage is standing on top of a great mountain in Galilee and he begins to encourage and exhort his disciples to do great and powerful things in the earth, to remind them whose they are and what God is calling them to do and be engaged in as a community. I thought I would share this because all around our community, we too need to be reminded that God has left us in the earth to make a difference for him. We're the salt of the earth. That means we're the change agents for these people and the neighborhoods and communities that are hurting. God has called us to be a believer that makes a difference and impacts the lives of those who are hurting around us.

So as you're studying this week in your classes and various studies, as your meeting in your communities and in your jobs remember that God has an awesome plan for your life and he has called you to make a difference on your jobs, in your homes, on your floors, and communities so that you can lead people into an eternal relationship with him. As I close, remember this: the bible says that by this will all men know you're his disciples, if you have love for one another. Can I pray for you today?

**PRAYER:**

Eternal father, thank you so much for each and every student, each program, each department. Thank you for what they mean to us, thank you for this reminder and this call to be mindful of those who are hurting around us. Those who are without a sense of belonging, those who are experiencing hardship in their families, those who oh God who are in bondage and battling addictions, those who are broken and hurting. Help us be salt and light as we come to serve them. Bless our campus, our leadership, our trustees, our Chaplain, each and every department and ministry team and most of all our students. Help us to live like you and be like you in all that we say and do. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Shine

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

MATTHEW 5:16

What a powerful, powerful call to you and I as followers of Christ. Here's why he wants us to be the light of the world: because he wants men everywhere to see our good works and to glorify his father in heaven. When you're feeding the poor, your light is shining. When you're ministering to the widows your light is shining. When you're visiting the prisoner your light is shining. When you're caring for the least of them, those who are hungry, homeless and destitute, your light is shining. When you're loving those who are unlovable, your light is shining.

Wheaton College is positioned to shine throughout the world. So thank you for remembering your call, thank you for remembering who you are. So as we close, remember these words from Christ, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." I love you today, and I encourage you to shine, shine, shine.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you today for another moment to reflect on your Word. Thank you for these bright lights that shine in the universe, whose works oh God bring you honor and glory. Would you use them, use them in their jobs, use them in their classes, use them oh God in their Bible studies to bring you honor and glory in all the earth. Thank you for Wheaton College that makes a difference in all of the world. Now, bless each student, give them the resources that they need. Bless the various ministry teams that serve on campus, our leadership and great student body. And we'll give you honor and glory and praise. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# The Blessings of God

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:3-12

These amazing seven Scriptures give us a list of how the blessings of God are for the children of God. He would bless those who are poor in spirit, bless those who mourn, bless those who are meek, bless those who hunger, bless those who are merciful, bless those who are pure in heart and bless those that are peacemakers. All things to all men, that we might bring him honor and glory.

So, as we go out into the world, as we leave our classes and places of study and serve those in our sphere of influence, on our jobs, in our dorms, and all across campus, make us to be what Christ would have us to be in the earth so that men would see him and come into an intimate and personal relationship with him.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you. Thank you for an amazing study. Thank you for what you're calling us to do and be in the earth. Thank you for your love for us and most of all, thank you for your words of life that encourage us how to live and walk and talk and be what you're calling us to be. Bless these, your people, now in amazing ways. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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# Seeking Peace

Therefore, my beloved and longed for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3

As we think about what it means to be a peacemaker, we look to Scripture for our kingdom worldview. The church in Philippi had a problem: several ladies in the congregation had a disagreement, and these ladies were key leaders in the church, and their disagreement began to cause much dissension among the congregation. So Paul, in this letter, he writes to the other leaders in this church to encourage the women to get along with each other. Over the next couple of weeks we're going to study what it means to be a peacemaker and how we ought to go about it. What are the steps, what are the ingredients to really have the mind of Christ?

We've come to this point in our journey where we study peacekeeping and peacemaking. In fact, it occurred several years ago when an accident happened at a college in California. A student was tragically killed and the universities came together to put together a peace plan for the city. And as they persisted together, they now have what they call today, building a Culture of Peace Month and Peace Week. I want to challenge you and invite you to journey with us in your classes, places of study, in your families, in your residential communities — what does it mean to be a peacemaker? How do you exemplify the love of Christ in every situation of your life?

**PRAYER:**

Father God, in the name of Jesus, thank you so much for community, for our campus, our leadership and thank you God for what this lesson is going to mean for us. How it's going to help us and encourage us. Help us to learn from the church of Philippi, help us to apply these key ingredients to our lives, that we may be the peacemakers you have called us to be. We love you and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Rejoice!

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

I find these words powerful in the midst of building a culture of peace week because they are two of the ingredients of what it means to be a peacemaker when you're in a troubling situation. First of all, Paul says the peacemaker ought to rejoice in the Lord; then he says "always." So in spite of the circumstances, in spite of the problems and issues, that are before us, one key ingredient for how we can keep the peace is to rejoice in the Lord always. That means that our focus is not on our problems, but our focus is on the Lord. Second of all we see he says not only should you rejoice in the Lord, but again I say rejoice. It's a reminder clause to do it often, to do it consistently, to do it consecutively, to make sure that our minds are in Christ.

And the third ingredient, he says, "let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Not only should you rejoice in the Lord and your focus be on the Lord, but your gentleness should be known to all men. So here's how we use this ingredient in the midst of a hostile culture. In a hostile situation we should be gentle. That's right. We should be gentle and treat the one who's been hostile toward us with the kindness of Christ. So again, as we close today, we look at three ingredients of what it means to be a peacemaker and a peace builder and a kingdom person in the midst of a situation.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, in the name of Jesus, I want to thank you for our campus community and thank you for our time to study in this culture. Lord, we need you. So teach us how to be kingdom people, how to be peacemakers. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Don't Be Anxious

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Here we find three critical ingredients for what it means to be a peacemaker. He says to the church in Philippi, "Don't be anxious," don't be so upset that you can't trust God for the outcome. He says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." What he's saying here is how you handle your anxiety, how you handle your critical situation is to be prayerful about it; pray for one another, pray with one another, pray about one another and then with supplication write down your requests and make sure you let them be made known to God and then have a thankful heart, do this with thanksgiving. He also says, "Let your requests be made known to God." These are the three critical ingredients to how you're going to keep the peace in the midst of your trials and tribulations in this culture. I hope that you're gleaning what I'm gleaning out of this amazing book that helps us to be peacekeepers.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you for our family here on campus. Thank you Lord for what you're teaching us this month in Building a Culture of Peace. Help us now to practice these key ingredients that Paul has given to us as we try to be the ones that bring unity to the midst of disunity. Help us as we continue to learn together, to serve together and grow together, and may your grace be upon us. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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# Finding Peace

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:7

Paul, in this very familiar passage, gives us the fruits of what it means to be a peacemaker. He says, “if you will rejoice in the Lord, if you’ll let your gentleness be known to all men, if you’ll be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer, supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, the evidence will be the peace of God.’ In other words, God will show up in the midst of your trial, in the midst of your crisis, in the midst of your struggle and he will give you peace and this peace will surpass all understanding. In fact, it won’t make sense to many people, but it will guard your heart, it will guard your mind and it will keep you in the love of Christ Jesus.

So, as we close today, being a peacemaker involves us inputting these ingredients in our hearts and in our minds and exercising all that God has called us to do and the fruit of these things will be peace. My prayer for you today is that you would be a peacemaker and that you would experience the peace of God that passes all understanding.

**PRAYER:**

Father, I pray. I pray now for your servants as they go out into a hostile world that God your peace would accompany them, would cover them, would strengthen them, would empower them. And God that they would know you today in their homes, in their club communities, in their classes and in their jobs and they would experience, Lord, the peace that can fix their hearts, fix their minds, and walk with them in special ways. You’re the prince of peace, so we call on you for that peace. Help us now. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

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# Meditate on These Things

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

What powerful words we find from the lips of the apostles, for these things are the fruit of peace. He says if you’re going to be a peacemaker, a peace builder, the key is going to be prayer; the key is going to be being peaceful and being gentle in spite of all the situations and circumstances you are facing. And as we close, here’s how you do these things: first of all, fill your minds with the things of God, read and study God’s word. This will teach you and will always inspire you to trust God, and God will give you the inner peace. Whatsoever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are love and of good report, think on these things. They’ll help you to become a peacemaker in the most difficult and trying times. As we look at these words I want to encourage you today. Memorize these, place these in your heart and God will make you the change agent he needs you to be if you too are going to become a peacemaker in a hostile world.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, in the name of Jesus, I pray that as we meditate on your Scripture and as we think on these things, truly Lord, that they would take root in our hearts and we would be able to be the change agents you’re calling us to be. To be the peacemakers and the peace builders that you desire for us to be. Now God, bless every listener that’s hearing these words. Bless every area of ministry, their leaders, their team and bless the families represented. Lord increase in us the key ingredient to being salty in a dying world. We love you Father. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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# Authority

And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on Earth."

MATHEW 28:18

This very powerful statement by our Christ is amazing for us to hear. As he meets with those disciples who are sitting with him on that hillside in Galilee— first of all they are astonished and amazed because he's been resurrected from the dead and as he appears to them they see that Jesus has conquered the grave, he's conquered death. His very first words to them are "All authority," the word in the original Greek language is exousia and it means to have power. It means to have authority or control over all things. He says, 'all power has been given to me,' and then he says in two words; in heaven and on earth. This would have been critical for them because just as he has conquered the grave he has established himself as the supreme authority in all of the universe.

What a powerful word to know today, that our Christ, our Savior, our God, our King, has all power of heaven and earth in his hands. Oh beloved, this means this, there is no trouble that you're going through today that Christ doesn't have power over. There's nothing that you're struggling with that Christ doesn't have power over. What good news this is in a Manna Moment for you. So if you're going through something, you're struggling with something, give it over to God. Why? Because all exousia of heaven and earth belongs to him.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you. Thank you, this morning, for our brothers and sisters, thank you so much for the power that rests in you. Thank you that we have access to you, just like those disciples that day on that mountain, thank you that your promises to them are your promises to us. We come now asking that you would bless your hearers, that you would encourage them, that you would strengthen them for their journey. Bless them as they study. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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# Observe What I Have Commanded You

Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And know I am with you always until the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:20

Here we have a very powerful promise that's wrapped up in the commission of Christ. See as followers of Jesus Christ it's the church's mission to both evangelize and make disciples and preach the good news about salvation. We're also to help other Christians to grow spiritually; and this is what Jesus is getting at in this text. He says, 'teach people to observe all things I have commanded.' What has he commanded? That we ought to love to love our neighbors as ourselves, we ought to love the father with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength, we ought to serve the poor, visit the prisoner, heal those who are sick; We ought to be about the good news of spreading the good news until he comes.

So part of our calling here at Wheaton College is to equip you so that you can become better servants for Christ wherever you go in the world. As we close, always remember what the church's primary responsibility is— it is to go and to serve. Part of our service is evangelism and discipleship, caring for the needs of those in our local body, but also those outside of our church. What a call, what a challenge. When Christ comes back on that great and powerful day he's going to ask us, what did we do for him as we served in the earth.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you so much for this moment of reflection, thank you for this season, thank you for the reminder and the missional priority of what you're calling us to do as your people. In Jesus name, Amen.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**

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# The Advent of Christ

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

LUKE 2:8-14

Dr. Luke, the great physician writing this text, is writing for a gentile audience who wants to know the story of Christ and the history of his lineage—how did he get here, why did he come, and what was his purpose? Here we find that Christ himself had a heavenly escort that came before him, they were angels and they proclaimed the word of the Lord where the people of Judea, the shepherds that day, would find the living Savior. We celebrate in December because it reminds us of the birth of Christ and why he came into the world. Scripture says that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. The most important thing to me about this text is that within it we see something marvelous.

When the angels gave the good news to the shepherds, the angel said, 'this will be a sign to you, you will find a babe in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" The angels were declaring a promise for us today and I want to declare the same promise to you. That's my prayer for you; that in your hearts, in your mind, God would be glorified and that there would be peace and goodwill toward you today.

**PRAYER:**

Father God, thank you for this wonderful reminder of the Christmas story. Thank you for our students, our staff and faculty, and our friends and families. Lord would you be praised this season and may there be peace and goodwill on earth toward all men. We love you and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Hope in Times of Change

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope and power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13

One of the greatest powers in the world is the power of Hope! It transcends doubt, it moves dismay, it breaks unbelief, and it empowers miracles. Hope enables the discouraged to believe again! Hope helps the student who longs for opportunity to strive for what they have never seen before. (Its powerful) It makes us trust God and believe that he can do things in us that we have never dreamed of accomplishing. Hope was created by God, for God, through God to help us to trust God.

- It's what Coaches give in difficult times, and crucial situations.
- It's what parents teach their babies to have in spite of what things look like.
- It's what Preachers possess, preach about and disseminate to the masses who are fearful about the eternal.
- It's what I pray that you cultivate in your hearts this season as disciples.

In Christ is Hope manifested into Greatness. Through Him we can do all things...Endure all things...Survive all things...and embrace another year of ministry..... In Christ ...we can walk in Hope, Sow in Hope, Teach with Hope, Believe in Hope and most of all "Keep Faith Hope and the Love of Jesus Christ in all that we say and do."

**PRAYER:**

Spirit of the living God increase our hope on today. Help us to never forget where our hope truly comes from in this Lenten season. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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## Is God calling you?

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

JOHN 1:43-45

Make no mistake about it. The God of Heaven and earth is still calling men and women to follow and obey Him. Jesus in today's text is summoning Phillip to come and be one of His disciples. This call was a call to come to get to know him. This call was a call that came by invitation only. Jesus was inviting Phillip the seeker, Phillip the lost one to come and to follow Him. This is a picture of the intimacy of God. God is yet calling for mankind to come unto him and to get near him to know him..

**PRAYER:**

Our father and our God, please don't stop calling us to get to know you. During this season of prayer and soul searching, continue to draw men and women, boys and girls, to know the God of the universe. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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## Why the Caged Bird Sings?

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.

ACTS: 16:25

Paul and Silas are on their second missionary journey in the region of Asia when they run into satanic opposition. Paul under the power of the Holy Ghost rebukes the underworld and sets free a young woman who has been held captive as a prisoner of an evil spirit. Her captors were men, who were under the influence of money. They prostituted her bondage for personal spoils and gains.

When the brothers delivered her soul, these men had them charged, falsely arrested, whipped, and put in prison. Here is where our text begins; it opens with the apostles in the penitentiary locked in solitary confinement, beaten and placed in an object of torture called "the stocks."

They were given a divine opportunity by God to be on display in their trouble. There is opportunity for the soldiers of Jesus Christ in the cage of adversity. Trials and tribulations can be strategic locations for the witness of Jesus Christ. When the problems of life confine us then is the hour for prayer and worship. For it is through the seasons of adversity that we will grow in our dependence and relationship with the Master.

"The Caged Bird" sings because it was designed to sing. Whether free or confined, the setting for which it exists has no bearing on the tune of its song.

- The caged bird sings because it was designed to sing.
- The caged bird sings because it cannot help but sing.
- The caged bird sings because it has to worship the creator.

As a church we have been given the privileged to represent Christ as his ambassadors in the Midnight hour of this age. The world is filled with darkness, loneliness, pain, isolation, difficulty, trouble, persecution, and much more. However, we will not fear, for our God is on the throne and he is watching over us and awaiting our request to deliver us. Just like our brothers, if we are willing to obey God at all costs we too can sing as the caged bird does.

We too can have a hope that will transcend despair, for we have the same God, we have the same hope, and we have the same access to the Father through his son Jesus Christ. I learn from this lesson, that when you are in Christ Jesus, salvation, and deliverance from the trials of life always come when you least expect it. I know that in the midnight hour of our dilemmas, it is very hard to see the salvation of the lord.

Nevertheless, God is always watching his children and he is very much attentive to their every need. There is salvation available for us as well in our season of adversity, so let us continue to worship and praise God in spite of our difficulty. He is worthy of the praise, honor, and glory. He will respond when he is ready to intervene.

**PRAYER:**

Father God in the name of Jesus, thank you for the season of adversity. Thank you for the reminder, about just how much you had to endure on our behalf. I pray that we would be like Paul and Silas in the midst of our times of persecution in discomfort. Help us to rejoice in difficult times. Thank you for this season of prayers. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.







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