

August Prayer Practice—Dwelling in the Word

This summer we have been introducing you to monthly prayer practices. We have also created a prayer station where you can leave a prayer and take a prayer. Here you will find prayers from the community, mostly through our mobile food pantry. Throughout the summer I have been reminding myself and all of us that prayer is the foundation on which our faith rests.

When we sit down for a meal, when we are notified that we have been selected for the job, the scholarship or the love of our life says, “yes”; these are times to rejoice in prayer, giving thanks to the Lord, the great provider, the giver of life, the creator of all things. When we are up late at night worried about that school project, in the waiting room of the hospital, told by our employer that our services are no longer required, these are times of prayer as well. In these moments God becomes our refuge and strength in the face of uncertainty and fear.

The psalmist of Psalm 121 writes, *“I lift up my eyes to the mountains, oh where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, creator of heaven and earth.”* This is true in times of joy and times of suffering. Prayer places us in relationship with God so that we might know who God is for us. Prayer deepens faith so that we can have the courage to do what God is calling us to do which often means getting outside of ourselves. This is the power of prayer to pull you into the work of God and deepen your ministry to the world.

In August, we are inviting you into one more prayer practice for the summer. This practice involves dwelling in the word with a particular focus on stewardship. You have heard me speak several times about stewardship and in September we will be kicking off a stewardship campaign. In August, I am inviting all of us to engage in prayerful discernment, discernment of the way God has blessed you and your family, discernment of your Godly gifts and talents that you express each and every day, and discernment of God’s call to engage in the work of the Lord for the sake of others.

To help us in this discernment we will introduce scripture readings with a particular emphasis on stewardship. You will find the weekly scripture in my weekly newsletter, on our website, as a handout given out each Sunday and at our prayer station.

Remember that “stewardship is the way we use the abundance that God has entrusted to our care to love God and our neighbor.” This is what we are discerning this month through our prayer practice.

HOPE

My prayer for each of you is that you might see for yourself the blessings of a loving God who has come into this world so that you might know who God is for you. I pray that you will place your trust in the Lord and know that God has a purpose for you, a call upon your heart and that you can be a contribution to the ministry of the Lord by investing your time, talent, and treasure in what God is doing all around you. Remember to focus less on the size of your offering and focus more on the size of your heart in your giving of yourself for the sake of others.

Pastor Erick

Your invitation for August will be to take the reading home with you and dwell in the word. This is what dwelling in the word might look like:

1. Find a quiet place and time of day where you will not be disturbed for 5 to 10 minutes (if you hear your monkey mind say - "this place does not exist" - thank your monkey mind for sharing and then get back to the task at hand).
2. Say a prayer that the Spirit of the Lord might open your heart and your ears to hear the word of God speaking into your life, especially around how you might be a steward of the Lord's work.
3. Read the scripture out loud. Reading out loud helps you to hear and feel the words. When we read out loud the words have a way of living in us. Read the scripture a second time.
4. Notice what words or phrases stood out to you. Pray over these words and phrases inviting God to speak to you.
5. Breathe. Be still. Listen for the call of the Spirit on your heart and what arises.

Week 2 (August 11) Scripture Reading:

Matthew 25:34-40

The Sheep and the Goats 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. **35** For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' **37** "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' **40** "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'