



## For Groups or Personal Prayer

Lent is a time to journey deeper into the love of God. This four week series can commence at any point during the Lenten season. One can pray with these scriptures and meditations for personal prayer or this can be done in a group setting. Each week, participants will spend time praying on their own with selected scriptures, and then come together with the group to share their reflections and experiences. The "First Gathering" sheet offers a suggestion for the first group gathering. The facilitator can read the scripture passage, guided meditation, and invitation to colloquy. After a few minutes of quiet, the group can share.

The last page of this PDF offers some weekly discussion prompts that can be used by a group facilitator.

Each week offers scripture passages and meditations focused on a particular theme:

### Week 1: Repentance and Conversion

- Luke 15:11-32 (Parable of the Prodigal Son)
- Acts 9:1-19 (Saul's conversion)
- Psalm 51 (Prayer for pardon)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (the old has passed away)

### Week 2: Prayer and Spiritual Discipline

- Psalm 63:1-8 (David's longing for God)
- Luke 18:1-8 (persistent widow)
- Ephesians 6:18-20 (persistence in prayer)
- Colossians 4:2-4 (be devoted to prayer)

### Week 3: Freedom and Surrender

- Isaiah 55:1-3 (Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters)
- Romans 12:1-2 (Present your bodies as a living sacrifice)
- Philippians 2:5-11 (Jesus did not grasp at equality with God)
- Mark 8:34-38 (Deny yourself and take up your cross)

### Week 4: Service and Love

- Matthew 25:31-46 (sheep and goats)
- Isaiah 1:16-20 (seek justice, mercy, and humility)
- James 2:14-17 (faith and works)
- 1 John 3:16-18 (love one another)

## Ignatian Format

We pray with scripture in the Ignatian tradition of prayer. See the next page for a handout on Ignatian Contemplation (imaginative prayer).



## Day 1

*I ask God for the grace to feel God's invitation for my transformation.*

### Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son)

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

### Meditation

Take a moment to imagine yourself as the younger son, sitting in the fields, hungry and alone, far away from home. What feelings come up for you?



Take a few moments to imagine the father running towards you, his arms outstretched in love and compassion. How does this make you feel?

Now, imagine yourself as the elder son, hearing of your brother's return. What thoughts and feelings come up for you in this moment?

Finally, imagine yourself as the father, looking upon both of your sons. How do you feel when you see the younger son, returned home and the elder son, feeling betrayed?

### Colloquy

I speak to Jesus as if he were a friend sitting right next to me. I can trust him, so I share with him the depths of my heart, including my experience of prayer today and any insights I may have received.



## Day 2

*I ask God for the grace to deepen my appreciation of prayer.*

### Luke 18:1-8 (The Persistent Widow)

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

### Meditation

Take a moment to be still... As you close your eyes it's almost as if you can see Jesus teach to the crowds. He speaks a moral lesson by way of a parable, revealing a truth about God. Engrossed in his words, you take in the imagery of a judge and a widow.

Let yourself enter into the story by imaging that you are the widow. In the parable, your plea for justice is relentless. You approach the judge, seeking what is right and fair. You don't give up, begging and pleading in the face of his disregard.

Now imagine your everyday reality. Your troubles are pressing, and you feel overwhelmed. You recognize that you have the same option open to you that the widow did in the parable: You can keep on praying, day and night if you must, to the one who judges justly and faithfully.

Reflect on the faith that is required to pursue what is just in God's eyes: What do you need from God? How persistent will you be in your plea? Can you surrender to God's timing and trust in the divine justice?

Let yourself sit in this moment and quiet your heart for a few moments as you remember that God is on your side. Though the times of waiting can feel like an eternity, will you trust that God sees your plea and will eventually provide justice?

Finally, consider one more question that Jesus has raised in the parable. Take a few quiet moments to listen deeply and trust that the answer is coming: As the Son of Man returns, will there be faith on earth?



Pause here in quiet, allowing yourself to receive peace and strength in the presence of God.

 **Colloquy**

I speak to Jesus as if he were a friend sitting right next to me. I can trust him, so I share with him the depths of my heart, including my experience of prayer today and any insights I may have received.



### **Week 1: Repentance and Conversion**

- ▶ Do I have a personal experience of repentance or conversion?
- ▶ How can I find God's mercy and forgiveness in my life?
- ▶ How has God been patient and kind to me?
- ▶ How can I make a fresh start and experience renewal in my relationship with God during this Lenten season?
- ▶ In what ways do I need to let go of my own sin and pride in order to be open to God's love and mercy?

### **Week 2: Prayer and Spiritual Discipline**

- ▶ How can I make prayer a priority in my daily life during this Lenten season?
- ▶ What are some specific ways that I can cultivate a deeper relationship with God through spiritual discipline?
- ▶ How can I use Ignatian techniques, such as the Examen and imaginative contemplation, to deepen my prayer life and draw closer to God?

### **Week 3: Freedom and Surrender**

- ▶ What areas of my life do I need to surrender to God in order to experience freedom?
- ▶ How can I use this Lenten season to become more aware of God's call to freedom?
- ▶ What are some ways that I can live out my freedom in Christ in the midst of a chaotic world?
- ▶ How can I trust God with the areas of my life that I find difficult to surrender?

### **Week 4: Service and Love**

- ▶ How can I respond to God's call to love and serve others by using the gifts and talents given to me?
- ▶ How can I put my faith into action by serving others during this Lenten season and beyond?
- ▶ In what ways can I show love and compassion to those who are in need, both within my church community and beyond?
- ▶ How can I imitate the selfless love of Jesus by serving and sacrificing for the sake of others?